

*Presented by Desire of the Libr
Revd James Thomey D.D.*

THE
Providential HISTORY
OF
MANKIND
OPENED.

THE
PROVIDENTIAL HISTORY



MANKIND

OPENED

THE
Providential HISTORY
OF
MANKIND
OPENED,

BY

The KEY "of the KNOWLEDGE of
GOOD and EVIL."

APPLIED TO

The HOLY SCRIPTURES,

By the Rev. JAMES STRONGE, A.M.
Of the Diocese of ARMAGH.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for J. DODSLEY, in Pall-Mall.
MDCCLXIV.

THE
Providential History

OF
MANKIND

OF THE EARTH

BY

THE KEY TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF
GOD'S WILL



APPLIED TO

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

By the Rev. JAMES STRONG, A.M.

Of the Diocese of Arundel.

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Printed for J. Dobson, in Pall-Mall.

MDCCLXIV.

TO
ALL THE MEMBERS
OF THE
Incorporated SOCIETY
FOR THE
PROPAGATION of the GOSPEL
in FOREIGN PARTS,

The following
ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE
ON THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES

Is most humbly Dedicated,

BY

Their Faithful

Obedient Servant,

J. STRONGE.

TO
ALL THE MEMBERS

OF THE
Incorporated Society
FOR THE

PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL
IN FOREIGN PARTS

THE
ARGUMENTS DISCOVERED



HOLY SCRIPTURES

AND THE HISTORY OF THE

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1840



A
T A B L E
OF THE
PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

THE Prefatory Discourse, concerning the advantages of attending to the providential History of the World. The great branches of that history are distinguished by the TWO PRINCIPLES from which the movements or actions of all mankind have proceeded. The false PRINCIPLE was taken to be the SANCTION of the LAW of NATURE, explained and perfected by divine authority, for the government of the nation of Israel. Their blindness and obstinacy, in rejecting their Messiah in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, are considered; the reason of them is shewn, and why they are not yet reconciled to the Christian church in acknowledging their Messiah. The only method that can be successful to convert them, is declared by what our Lord said concerning their infidelity, when he conversed among them.

A summary view of all the opposition that has been, or that can be made to the gospel-revelation, is given to us in prophetic characters and descriptions, by our Lord and his Apostles, in the writings of the New Testament. Many of these passages are considered and applied. Some reflections upon the present circumstances of these nations, and of the ministers of the reformed established church in them.

C O N T E N T S.

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Preliminary observations, concerning the LAW of NATURE, which tend to ascertain the LIMIT of human REASON in our religious concerns.

Doctor Clarke's "Demonstrations of the Being and Attributes of God" are examined and refuted. His fallacy in pretending to establish the truth by demonstration is exposed.

S E C T. II.

The refutation of Dr. Clarke's "Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion," and the false consequences which he had drawn from his demonstrations are discovered.

S E C T. III.

Preliminary observations concerning revealed Religion, and what is properly to be understood by the LIGHT of NATURE. The sacred history of the Creation, and of the FALL of Man. The consequences of his disobedience in respect to his body and his mind. The SENTENCE of divine judgment which passed on the concealed ENEMY, and the PROMISE of divine mercy by the deliverance of mankind from the power and policy of that enemy. That the institution of sacrificing was of divine appointment.

S E C T. IV.

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C O N T E N T S.

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S E C T. V.

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*The reign of Saul the first King of Israel; his disobedience to the command of God, and his rejection upon it. He was an example in the Jewish state of the consequences which would have arisen in the governments of the Kings of ALL the NATIONS, in case they had been subject, as
Saul*

C O N T E N T S.

Saul was, to the LAW of NATURE, revealed and perfected by Divine Authority.

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The Life and Sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold by the Prophets, and witnessed by the Evangelists; with some observations concerning the method of inviting the Jews into the Gospel Covenant, and to acknowledge their Messiah, by directing their attention to the books of Moses and of the Prophets.



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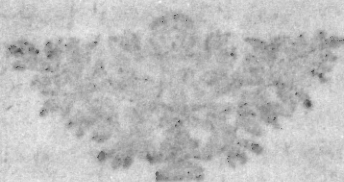
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 and of the Kings.

12 JUL 62





THE
Prefatory DISCOURSE,

CONCERNING

**The Use and Advantage of giving our
Attention to consider the Providential
History of Mankind.**

THE providential history of mankind contains the account of a series of important events, which are conducted by the unerring wisdom and power of God, to accomplish the great end of his mercy and goodness towards them, by their restoration to his favour in their redemption from sin and misery and death, to which they were subjected in their fallen state, unto a state of holiness and happiness, through the merits and mediation of our Lord the Messiah, our blessed Redeemer.

The order of this history is marked out, from the beginning unto the consummation of that design, by the prophetic word of God in the holy scriptures.

The opposition made to the execution of this design, has arisen originally from the evil spirit described in the word of God, who, by means of that evil principle

ciple of life which he at first introduced by his artifice, has still continued to propagate the apostacy among mankind, by his seed taking root in the world, and so producing those fruits of rebellion, which still continue to uphold his kingdom.

This kingdom (or the kingdoms of this world considered as independent of the divine government) is supported by that course of action which does arise from the PASSIONS, which are raised in the human mind by outward sensible objects producing the pleasures or pains of sense. So that when we live by making the KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL by our senses the chief motive or principle of our actions, and follow our own experience, and our own wills, which, through our corrupted nature, do always incline to guide us by that principle, we are then said, according to the word of God, to *live after the flesh*, and are subjects of his kingdom who is stiled the God of this world; and the happiness, such as it is, we enjoy in it, does altogether depend upon temporal things, and upon that temporary habit or contexture of body by which we continue, for some short time, fitted and disposed for sensual gratifications.

In like manner, when the kingdoms of this world are considered as upheld only by worldly policies, their prosperity or political welfare does depend on a conformity of action, in the several members who compose the body of a society or kingdom, as directed by laws or rules of moral conduct and behaviour, which are enforced by temporal rewards and punishments.

The laws of nature, comprehending the laws of nations, and the laws of every particular society, do all rest upon the same sanction, as derived from the general principle, the knowledge of the pleasures and pains of sense, which is the CAUSE of the dissolution of all governments of human invention; for howsoever complicated their natural imperfections may appear, yet when they are properly traced up and examined in their source, it will be found, that this corrupt principle of life

life gave birth to all those disorders which have already overturned the great empires that are sunk down, and does still continue to undermine the strength of those kingdoms which are now uppermost in the earth.

The kingdom of the Messiah, which stands in opposition to the kingdoms of this world, had its beginning in the first promise of God made to man in his fallen state, to give him hope of a recovery from the misery to which he had subjected himself by his apostacy, having brought sin and death upon himself and his posterity. The subjects of the kingdom of the Messiah, who are held in obedience to his government by their hope in that promise, are continually solicited to depart from his service by the present advantages and allurements of the kingdoms of this world, and thereby to derive their principles of life in pursuit of their happiness from the enjoyment of outward sensible things.

In order to destroy this false principle under the reign of the Messiah, IT was taken into the divine government of the nation of the Jews, and was made the sanction of their law, which is the law of nature explained, perfected, and enforced by the divine authority of its lawgiver; and upon full trial of it, the weakness and insufficiency of that law is evinced, as no man living by that law could be justified in the sight of God, by fulfilling all the terms and conditions of it. Therefore to set aside this unprofitable LAW of WORKS, the Son of God came down from heaven and fulfilled all the conditions of it by his obedience; and having published the spiritual laws of his kingdom, under the sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments ascertained by his resurrection from the dead, the evil principle, introduced by the disobedience of man, was destroyed; for the whole power and force of it was tried and broken upon him, by the painful sufferings of his life and of his death; and so this great design was accomplished in his triumph over sin and death, having opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers

in his name, who live by his word in observing the terms of his gospel of peace.

The Christian believers, the servants and followers of Christ, are intitled to receive the promise of his being with them by his holy Spirit unto the end of the world, to guide them into the way of truth, and to preserve them from the address and policies of the evil spirit, labouring to seduce them by the allurements of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind, and the power of evil habits contracted by guilt; and by the information of the word of God, derived to us by the holy Spirit, the Comforter, for our support in our Christian conflicts, we are assured of a final victory and release from the power of our spiritual adversary.

We are taught by our Lord himself to observe the main purpose of his coming upon earth, for the conviction of his adversaries, as he has expressed it in describing the office of the holy Spirit, who was sent *to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* To reprove the world of sin, *because they believed not in me* as the promised seed the Messiah, and did not trust in my power alone to bruise the head of the serpent, but sought to escape from death, and to be justified by observing the LAW of NATURE, or the law of works, by which, as it is evident upon trial, they could not be justified, but are reprov'd and convinced of sin in the sight of God.

Again, To reprove or to convince the world of *righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.* Having shewn by my obedience unto the Law of Nature a perfect example of righteousness, by fulfilling all the conditions and precepts of it, the approbation of God my Father is shewn in his acknowledgment of my righteousness, by his receiving me into heaven after I am risen from the dead, *and ye see me no more.*

Lastly, To reprove and convince the world of *judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* For after a full trial has been made of the policies of the prince

The PREFATORY DISCOURSE.

prince of this world, he is found unequal to maintain the power he gained by the fall of man, who is again restored to the divine favour, and his entrance into heaven is opened to him, in opposition to all the craft and power of the enemy: therefore *the prince of this world is judged*, according to the sentence originally pronounced upon the serpent.

In the contemplation of the order of the providential history of mankind, the histories of all heathen nations are to be considered as severally exhibiting the efforts of human sagacity and invention, through the various forms of their political institutions, to perpetuate respectively their temporal happiness and security.

The dissolution and destruction of those great empires that did successively govern the world, which are foretold in the sacred prophetic writings, are evidences of the knowledge and wisdom of God, who hath declared from the beginning what consequences would arise from the actions of men, directed by their own WILLS; and that, according to his WORD, the death or dissolution of all combined bodies of men would ensue, by living according to that false principle, as certainly as the death of every individual of the sons of fallen man.

In the most extensive view of the history of all mankind, the actions of every particular person, who hath conversed in the world, are to be considered as having their due place and order in the conduct of that great design, either as conspiring with the purpose of God's mercy to declare and uphold the truth upon earth to his honour and glory, or as under the influence of the enemy of our peace, guided by the evil principle, introduced by his invention, to follow their own wills in support of infidelity, opposing the word of God through the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind debased and corrupted by earthly purposes and pursuits.

The manifold use and expediency of contemplating this great plan of salvation in the providential history

of mankind, will appear, by due attention to the several parts of it.

I. In regard to the Jewish nation we may observe, that they have departed, and do still continue separated from the true church of God, because their attention has been given to the temporal promises of the law, without attending to the spiritual design of it; hereby, in their purposes, vacating and setting aside the great design of Almighty God in blessing and honouring them with his favour, as his chosen instruments of a blessing to be conveyed through them to all the families of the earth, according to the promises he had made to the great ancestors of their nation.

As their eyes have been fixed on earthly projects to restore the prosperity of their nation, being misguided through the prejudice they have conceived in that respect, by the rank it held among the kingdoms of the world in the days of Solomon, they have not yet been able to discern that a greater than Solomon was among them, who came to put an end to their false conceits about temporal happiness, and to establish a law of righteousness by which they and all other nations of the earth should be reconciled unto God, by a victory he obtained over the enemy of our happiness, to lead us in triumph unto his kingdom in heaven.

So long as the Jews continue to be children of this world, and are confident in reasoning according to their own imaginations in pursuit of their happiness, they can never be persuaded to believe in their Messiah as their Saviour, in any other respect, but as some great captain or worldly potentate, clothed with ensigns of temporal power, to establish thereby the throne of his kingdom over them, as set uppermost among all the nations of the earth. But when they lay aside their own reasonings, and betake themselves to hear Moses and the prophets concerning the life and sufferings of the Messiah, they will discern him to be a greater than Solomon, as he is described by Jacob, under the title Shiloh, the meek or the peaceful one; and that he did

then

then indeed ride in triumph over their enemies, when he rode into Jerusalem, as all the Evangelists bear witness to him, sitting upon a colt the foal of an ass, and *binding his foal unto the vine, and his asses colt unto the choice vine. He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.*

It arises only from our weak and childish conceptions, in favour of outward shews of temporal power, adorned with trappings of worldly grandeur and magnificence, that we are betrayed according to our vain imaginations to suppose, that God should take the same methods that men use in subduing their enemies, and that his great Ambassador should appear in robes of majesty, surrounded in like manner as earthly princes are with military guards and weapons of war, to take immediate vengeance in fury upon his enemies.

But we are taught from the wisdom of God by his word, that all temporal power which stands out in rebellion or opposition to the laws of his kingdom under our Lord the Messiah, is no otherways accounted of in his sight who is *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, than as a *bruised reed*, or like the nuisance of *smoking flax*; and that he to whom all power in heaven and earth was given, did then manifest his almighty power and wisdom, in subduing his and our enemies, when he endured the contradictions of sinners against himself, with their cruel smiting, and mockeries, and revilings, and the bitter pains of an ignominious death; and that the utmost fury and malice of the enemy let loose upon him, could not provoke his spirit to resist, or to make use of any temporal means to baffle his power: *But he was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.* After all the indignities and provocations he met with, *he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street; a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench*, but giving his attention solely to accomplish that great purpose

for which he came upon earth, *He shall bring forth judgment unto truth*, in opposition to all the lies and policies of the enemy.

2. By due attention to the providential history of mankind, we learn what relation we bear, as Christians, to the nation of the Jews; that as believers in the true God, and in his Son our Lord, the Messiah, we are the children of Abraham by faith, descended from him; and in this sense our Lord hath expressed this mighty privilege belonging unto that nation, *for salvation is of the Jews*: so that all our title to righteousness, and the benefits of it, are derived from the promise of God made unto Abraham, and by consequence to us his children, the heirs of his faith; *and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

Here again we may observe the error of the Jewish nation, in claiming the glorious privileges vouchsafed and promised to them, as belonging to the sons of Abraham their father according to the flesh; by which title, indeed, they might claim to succeed to an earthly inheritance, as the custom and law is among men. But since we know, from their history, that they have long ago forfeited their title to the land of promise, considered as a temporal inheritance appointed for them by God, it follows, that their being Abraham's children, in the course of natural generation, can have no weight in restoring them again to their possessions in Canaan; and therefore it remains, that they should renew and revive their title to the promise of God made to Abraham, by considering that promise as a conveyance of a much greater blessing than an earthly Canaan, which Abraham himself did, who being the head and representative of the faithful, *by faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange country*, and did not think of taking up his rest in it; for, according to the promise made to him, he looked for a *better country, that is, an heavenly.* And so he continued dwelling
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in tabernacles (made only for present convenience) *with Isaac and Jacob*, the heirs with him of the same promise; *for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* That is, he looked unto the hope of a Christian, to be made happy in a future state; and all faithful Christians, by their new birth, regenerated from their natural sinful state, by understanding and believing in the promises of God, as Abraham did, become his children in the account of God; *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not of the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

In this circumstance also of the Jewish obstinacy, in adhering to the temporal application of the promises of God, we may discern the true cause of their present condition, which would seem altogether unaccountable to human reason, uninstructed in the providential history of mankind; that is, how it should come to pass, that the nation of the Jews, which still continues separated from all other nations of the earth, should never be able, in so many ages as have elapsed since their religious and civil government has been dissolved, to obtain any civil establishment, either independently, or as a part of any other of the nations among whom they are dispersed; but that wheresoever they are scattered, they are regarded, by the people among whom they dwell, as persons cut off from society, and who ought still to be debarred from the privileges belonging to the country or city where they are allowed to have any residence. Insomuch that we have seen various attempts, made with large promises on their behalf, to obtain the rights of other natural-born subjects, in countries where they are dispersed, always defeated, by a general resentment or rage rising among the people to whom they meant to be united as brethren in the enjoyment of the legal protection and benefits of society.

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This aversion or hatred to the Jews is clearly accounted for by attending to the providential history of the nation, as delivered in the word of God; for as they forfeited the divine favour and protection, which was promised for the support of their temporal prosperity in their own land, and became thereby liable to all the curses which are written against them in their law upon that account; so it followed, that the first covenant made with their fathers, and established by temporal and earthly promises, was set aside, as insufficient to retain them who were under it in their obedience, or to make them righteous in the sight of God: and therefore, when our Lord the Messiah came into the world, to invite the Jews and all other nations to enjoy the benefits of the NEW COVENANT of grace, his brethren the Jews, who rejected him and his doctrine, and crucified the Lord of Life, *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*; and by looking after an earthly kingdom, or establishment, according to the terms of the law, which has been abrogated by divine authority, of which they had notice by Moses and the Prophets, they counteract and endeavour what they can to set aside the general purposes of divine mercy and grace; and while they limit the promises of God, according to their own interpretation, as conveying an assurance only of future times of earthly happiness and glory to themselves, they are so far enemies to all mankind, whose happiness in a future state is assured to them, by the promises he made to the fathers of the Jewish nation on their behalf; therefore so long as that nation does continue in their infidelity, rejecting the terms of the NEW COVENANT in the gospel of Christ, no wonder they should continue to be rejected and abhorred of all other nations upon earth.

And so the design of building up their nation, under any form of civil establishment, by uniting with any other people of the earth, has had the like issue with that undertaking of the Emperor Julian the apostate, who was baffled in his purpose of rebuilding the temple

temple of Solomon, in contradiction to the prophecy of our Lord, by the foundations of it boiling up in the tremulous motion of an earthquake, resembling the fervors and tumults of a nation in popular commotions, resenting the purpose of any alliance or settlement with the Jews, in admitting them to partake of their civil rights and immunities.

The Jews are told by Moses, that, in consequence of their infidelity, the Lord will make their *plagues wonderful*, Deut. xxviii. 59. an expression worthy to be remarked by us and by them. For when we compare the prophetic declarations of their calamities with the accomplishment of them, they are wonderful in all events, corresponding minutely to the providential history of that people.

Their plagues are wonderful, as the vengeance of God has been executed upon them with severity, beyond the measure which has fallen upon any other nation of the earth, for the wickedness of it.

Their plagues are wonderful in the continuance of them to this day, that they have not yet known the things which belong to their peace, although they are clearly set forth in the sacred history, which we receive from them, and by their testimony, as the word of God: and in this respect they are most wonderful, that they have conveyed the treasures of divine wisdom to the Gentiles, whom they meant to exclude from the benefits of the covenant made with their fathers, and have thereby, through their jealousy, hitherto shut out themselves from the privileges of the covenant of grace.

So wonderful in this respect are the plagues of that people, that their blindness and obstinacy are imputed to the clearness and evidence of the testimonies which have been given them to open their eyes, and to convince their understandings, that they might perceive those glad tidings which were brought to them by their Messiah, our Lord.

Isaiah

Isaiah vi. 9. *Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

While their prejudices in favour of earthly things continue deep-rooted in their hearts, the applications, and address, and messages of God vouchsafed to them, have no other effect, but to confirm them in hope of that exalted superiority in worldly privileges, above other nations of the earth, which they have falsely conceived belonging to them by the promises of God; and therefore, until these prejudices are rooted out, what the prophet had to declare unto them, in the clearest and plainest terms, could have no other effect, but to harden them in their own perverseness, by the gracious messages with which he was sent. And so his commission by divine authority is made out, with a prophetic designation of the consequences that would follow from the execution of it: *Make the heart of this people fat*, as the case is of those persons who are satiated with gluttony of sensual gratifications; *and make their ears heavy*, as utterly indisposed to hearken to other purposes, than such only as regard the service of their lusts; *and shut their eyes*, being inclinable to slumber in slothfulness and ease, with the enjoyment of sensual delights, and obstinately resolved to allow no entrance into their minds, for any such tidings as would awaken them from their delusions, and of course determined to receive no message from the Prophet to the purpose he was commissioned to deliver it to them, *lest they see with their eyes*, if they would consent to open them, *and bear with their ears*, if they would incline them, *and understand with their heart*, if they would receive instruction, *and convert and be healed* from their transgressions, according to the gracious purpose of God to save his people from their sins, which yet they will not consent to part with.

Lastly, their plagues are wonderful, insomuch as they have continued under them for adhering erroneously to the law given by Moses, instead of receiving a NEW and a BETTER COVENANT, offered to them in its place by

by the mercy of God ; and yet, by this error and obstinacy in unbelief, they have been separated and preserved from being lost among the nations of the Gentiles, like their brethren of the ten tribes, who joined in the national and idolatrous religions of the countries in which they were dispersed.

So that according to the promise of God, that he would not *fail David*, it is seen, by the course of his wonderful providence, that the Jews are still preserved to accomplish the future purposes of his mercy and grace, both to them and the Gentiles, when they are converted to the true faith, according to the prophetic declarations of that glorious and most happy and wonderful change that will be made upon earth, when the Jews and Gentiles being united in one fold under one shepherd, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

3. By considering the relation we bear to the Jews, from whom the true faith hath descended to us, who are their children in it, we discern our obligation in duty and gratitude for the blessings we have received, to endeavour what we can to bring them who are now the sons of Abraham only according to the flesh, to be his children also by faith ; *and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

There is no doubt but very many of us are willing to undertake this task, by argumentative discourse to persuade and convert the Jews, and are ready to express our astonishment at their incredulity, when we can shew them such evident proofs to engage their attention, and to obtain their confession in acknowledgment of our Lord the Messiah, our holy Redeemer.

But we learn from the sacred history of that people, that by the conduct of divine providence towards them, they lay under the weight of a greater prejudice against embracing the spiritual laws of the kingdom of the Messiah, than the nations of the Gentile world had to contend

contend with ; and to remove this prejudice from their minds, is the great task which does yet remain to be accomplished, before they come into the church of Christ.

To help forward in this task, our doctrine and our examples must both conspire to publish and uphold the spiritual laws of the kingdom of God, and by such agreement of our words and actions to the gospel of Christ, we are intitled to be called after his name, and to enjoy the privileges of his heavenly kingdom. So that until the fulness of the Gentiles be come into the true church of Christ, and they do, by their profession and practice, conspire to persuade the Jewish nation to believe in him, our astonishment and wonder may cease at their incredulity ; and let us rather be astonished and wonder at ourselves, who are not converted and reformed by the clearness and evidence of those threatenings of the wrath of God against our wicked lives, which are read among us every day from his holy word.

We may continue to call ourselves Christians, and the Jews also will call us Christians ; and both may be deceived in the application of the name : for if we suppose we are Christians, either by birth or by baptism, when we do not observe the terms of the New Covenant, into which we have been baptized, we are none of Christ's in his account, who will not be deceived by our pretences to his name ; for so he has told us, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven.*

The Jews are also deceived by calling wicked men Christians, who are utterly unlike the Master, of whom they profess to be followers ; and therefore how can we expect they should learn from us the lessons of his wisdom, until they see we ourselves are converted from our natural corruptions, and so have profited by the example and the instructions of our Lord.

But

But besides the wicked lives of professed Christians, which may justly create an offence to the Jews, and so hinder their entrance into the church of Christ, there are other causes to be assigned for the delay of their conversion, on account of the corruptions in point of doctrine and worship, which appeared among the members of Christian societies, in a short time after our blessed Lord had ascended into heaven, and do still continue to infest his church.

The enemy of truth and of true religion did not give up his cause for lost, after all his temptations had failed, and the utmost efforts of his malice and industry had been baffled by the Captain of our Salvation; but as every man has likewise his trial to abide, in passing through the course of this evil world, the adversary has still the advantage of practising upon every follower or soldier of Christ, to tempt him from his obedience, and to prevail upon him, by the numberless allurements of sensual gratifications, to desert from his master, to give up the contest against his natural and acquired corruptions and evil habits, and for the sake of present ease, or pleasure, or honour, or profit, to renounce the faith and the hope of a Christian.

As the support of a Christian life is derived from the word of God, conveying the promises of his pardon and grace to repenting sinners, and assuring them of mercy and reconciliation with him, through the merits of our holy Redeemer; hence the artifice and industry of the devil has been employed in attacking severally all the articles of the Christian faith, as they are delivered to us in the gospel of Christ. So the state of his church, assailed by the secret and subtil insinuations and policies of the enemy, is described by our Lord himself in his parable of the tares of the field; by which he declares how suddenly the attempt would be made to corrupt his doctrine, after he had preached it to the world, and that this attempt would take effect in producing an opposition that would continue unto the end of the world.

According to his instruction we discern whence those divisions and disturbances have originally proceeded, that have delayed the full and final accomplishment of the promise of the *Good Shepherd*, which he made to the Jews, among whom he was then conversing, when he told them, *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

It is to be observed, that in the explanation of the parable of the tares of the field, which our Lord gave to his disciples, he mentions two sorts of persons which are described in it, *The good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; that is, of the enemy that sowed them, the devil.* So that all the opposition made to the truth of his religion, has proceeded from the same sort of men, at different times, and under different names, labouring to maintain the cause of infidelity; or, in other words, endeavouring to set uppermost the authority of human wisdom and knowledge, in contradiction to the authority of the word of God. For how complicated soever the contest may appear, which hath so long depended, by the inventions of false religions, and false arguments, to subvert the true religion; yet the impostures of the enemy to deceive mankind, are all finally directed to one point, with which he at first set out, and in which he succeeded by his artifice, to destroy their FAITH in what God had said, and to refer them for a principle of life to be guided by the SIGHT of their own eyes, and by a conceit of KNOWLEDGE, to be derived from their own understandings.

These observations may lead us to discover in what manner the adversaries of the truth may be confuted, and how it has come to pass, that the Gentiles are not yet fully come into the Christian church, and that the accomplishment of our Lord's promise, concerning the conversion of the Jewish nation, is delayed by it.

We know that our Lord has promised, in behalf of his church, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,*

it, which is a sure argument of comfort to all those who trust in his word, to give them hope in a deliverance from all the power and policy of the enemy; and that however they may be assaulted by his malice and industry, yet, if they are faithful to our blessed Master, his grace will protect them against the evil spirit, and all his instruments sent forth from the gates of hell to disturb our peace; and this hope and comfort belongs to every sincere Christian, separately considered as a member of the Christian church.

But when this church is viewed in a collective society, as the body of Christ, this promise of our Lord, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, does imply, that his providential care and support of it will disappoint the designs of the enemy in his purposes to separate this body from its head, and the members of it from one another, thereby, to accomplish its final destruction.

If we mean to discharge our duty in obviating these designs of the adversary, we must have recourse to those instructions which are left by our Lord and his Apostles, who have given a prophetic history and description of the persons who are the adversaries of his religion; whence they have proceeded, and what their generation has been, as originally descended from the old deceiver; and also of the arts they make use of to deceive, and the chief arguments on which they have built up their heretical impostures.

To begin the history of these persons, who are all the children of the great adversary of the truth, we may take the words of our Saviour, Matt. vii. 15. and xxiv. 24. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps cloathing, in outward appearance of garb and profession, as if they were sheep of my flock; but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* That is, howsoever these false teachers may pretend by their discourse to promote the welfare of my church, their actions will discover their insincerity, and that
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their real intention is to scatter and destroy the flock : *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, to deceive and amuse the senses of mankind ; insomuch that if it were possible for their power and industry to accomplish it, they shall deceive the very elect, even those persons who are the elect or chosen vessels of God for conveying and supporting his truth in the world, in opposition to the lies and impostures of the devil.*

Again, Our Lord says, *Take heed that no man deceive you ; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ.* And so it was that some of the antient heretics did assume the name of Christ the Messiah ; but this prophetic designation may be allowed to comprehend every false prophet and heretical teacher of the latter times, who says that he is a Christian.

To the same purpose of what our Lord has said, St. Paul gives warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Acts xx. 28.

Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

And again, in his Epistle to the Romans, among the last words of his care and love towards them, he adds, Romans, xvi. 17,

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them ; for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

The same Apostle, in his Epistle to the church at Corinth, reproves them sharply for admitting distinctions or divisions among them, on account of the different teachers from whom they received the word of faith,

faith, as if they had any authority of their own to recommend what they preached.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat : for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal : for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men ?

For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal ?

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man ?

And again the Apostle admonishes the Colossians,

Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily : and ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

As the professors of the Christian religion were then in danger of being perverted by two sorts of adversaries to the truth of it, the caution given by the Apostle has respect unto them both : first, to keep it pure from the mixtures of philosophy and vain deceit of the schools of human wisdom, after the traditions or instructions of the reputed wise men, the philosophers or masters of them, who taught their scholars after the rudiments of the world, according to the dictates of such persons as were esteemed the most eminent in the knowledge of it, and in the worship of those deities by whom they believed it was governed ; so that whatever wisdom is derived from their principles is *not after Christ* ; and his gospel does not stand in need of being helped out with the precepts of human authority, *for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* ; and therefore his wisdom is absolutely perfect, as being the wisdom of God, who *was manifest in the flesh* ; and *ye are compleat in him*. If ye live by his wisdom, your everlasting happiness is secured beyond all the power

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of the enemy to separate you from Christ, who *is the head of all principality and power.*

And then with respect to the other sort of adversaries who contend for the support of the Jewish church, as necessary also under the Christian dispensation; the Apostle argues against them, that there is no need of observing the external typical rites of the law; for those shadows or faint representations of good things, which were to come, are done away and abolished, when the things themselves are come by Christ.

As for example, in the case of circumcision, which was a rite of initiation, or entrance, into the covenant with God, upon the terms of the Jewish law; this rite was typical, according to the severity of that dispensation, by circumcision made with hands, cutting off with *sharp knives* the lusts of the flesh: but of this rite there is no more occasion, after ye have put on Christ, with a disposition to true holiness and righteousness in him, *in whom ye also are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

So that the baptismal rite of initiation into the new covenant, by dipping the body in water as buried, and raising it up again, does exhibit the new birth unto everlasting life, through faith in the resurrection of Christ.

And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, in your natural unregenerate sinful state, hath he quickened together with him, by communication of his holy spirit, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us; a burthensome and unprofitable law of ceremonious observances, no ways contributing to our happiness or holiness, but contrary to it, as teaching us to rest upon the merit of outward purifications; the necessity of which law our Saviour abolished,

abolished, by teaching us the way to purify our hearts, and therefore he *took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*; for in suffering by the nails of his cross the penalty of disobedience to the law which he fulfilled for our sakes, he did by those nails abolish the sanction of the law, and thereby set aside the old covenant of works, as no longer in force to bind those who believe in him. And by his death and resurrection from the grave, *having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*; having withstood the utmost efforts of the malice and rage of the enemy exerted against him, by the sufferings he underwent in his life, and by his death, he did then destroy the evil principle of the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by our senses, which had no effect upon him to withdraw his obedience from the Will of his heavenly Father, and to make him decline drinking of the bitter cup of his wrath against sinners; and therefore in their stead, and in their behalf, he spoiled principalities and powers of darkness of their influence and authority in the world, by destroying that evil principle by which their kingdom is upheld; and made a shew of their spoils openly by his resurrection, triumphing over them in it.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ. The sacred institution of holy days, as separated from ordinary or common days, are no other ways to be accounted of in the Jewish œconomy, than as a shadow of things to come; that is, of such things as are commemorated in the festivals of the Christian church; and therefore that shadow is to pass away, *but the body is of Christ*, the real substance is of him which will continue for ever.

From hence the apostle proceeds to another caution, relating to corruptions of Christian worship, which some of the earlier heretics endeavoured to introduce, who are said to have taught their followers, that the

angels should be worshipped by whom the law was given on Mount Sinai; but as there is a close correspondence between the Jewish and the Romish churches, in the opposition made by them both to the Christian church, the advice given by the apostle does extend also to that heresy of the latter times.

Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. These words do most clearly cut off the whole pretence in favour of angel or saint worship, which is recommended by an idolatrous apostate church, as suitable and becoming for us who are unworthy without such intercessors to approach the throne of the divine majesty. But in opposition to this deceitful argument, the apostle warns them of the guile that is in it, that they may not be diverted from the true object of their worship *in a voluntary humility*, and thereby lose their reward, by addressing themselves to fictitious intercessors; *and not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*; so that all spiritual graces and comforts in a Christian life are derived from our union with Christ as our head, and the body of the faithful in his church knit together increaseth with the increase of God, through the mediation and intercession of Christ our holy Redeemer.

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not, taste not, handle not; which all are to perish with using) after the commandments and doctrines of men? which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. These words are easily applied to reprove the mock-worship of the Jewish or of the Romish church, in which the greatest stress is laid on such-like external and superstitious observances.

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In the second epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, he takes occasion to confute a false opinion, which did prevail among the Christian believers, that our Lord would then suddenly appear for their support and protection, to take vengeance upon his and their enemies.

There is no need of taking part with any of the commentators upon the words of the apostle, who mean to limit their extent to a precise meaning of them, directed either to the Jewish or Romish church; for according to the fulness and sufficiency of prophetic history, they may be properly applied to them both, as they correspond in many like corruptions of doctrine and worship, to oppose the purity of the doctrine and worship of the Christian church.

But it is most obvious to us who are acquainted with the blasphemous pretensions of the church, and the usurped authority of the court of Rome, to apply the expressions of the apostle, as literally marking out the impostures which have been propagated from the head of that church.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the faith and hope we have of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the joys we look for by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled with any anxious or disquieting thoughts concerning this matter, for which there is no grounds, neither by spirit of prophecy, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, a remarkable defection and apostacy from the Christian faith, as was occasioned by the spreading of the Arian heresy, which was preparatory to the blasphemous pretension to infallibility, residing in the head of the Romish church, for quieting and composing religious controversies; so that before the day of our Lord come, this imposture must have its full effect, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,

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or that is worshipped; that is, who opposeth and exalteth himself not only above all the rulers and kings of the earth, but even above God himself, who is worshipped in heaven, *so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*, by laying claim to the absolute power of the keys to open heaven to whom he pleases, and by dispensing with the observance of the laws of God, in granting pardons and indulgences at his will to those who break them.

Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I told you these things concerning the opposition that would be made to the faith, and the falling away from it? *And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time*; for the impostures which will arise to pervert the truth, are to follow in succession, according to the prophetic and providential vision and declaration of them; *for the mystery of iniquity doth already work*, the counsels of the spiritual enemies of our faith are already prepared for assaulting it; *only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way*. There is yet some one or other in the Christian church, who holdeth back or defeateth that counsel or mystery of iniquity, which will not effect its purpose, to occasion a falling away or a very great defection from the faith, until he is removed; *and then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming*; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, usurping all power, temporal and spiritual, over the bodies and souls of men; and, for support of the imposture, having recourse to mock miracles, and signs, and lying wonders, *and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish*, by every art of deceit giving encouragement to unrighteousness in them that perish; *because they received not the love of the truth*, by holding the word of God uppermost in their hearts and affections, and thereby making it the rule of their lives, *that they might be saved by it*; and for this cause of their
apostacy,

apostacy, in departing from the love of the truth, *God shall send them strong delusion*; by the order of his providential government of the world, he shall send them strong delusion, through the submission of princes and worldly potentates, giving their power to the beast, to the temporal power and management of the court of Rome; the votaries of that corrupted church shall be led by this delusion to believe a lye, and take for truth the forgeries and impostures of the false prophet, or spiritual power of that church. *That they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*; that upon trial of such persons before God's tribunal, that circumstance on which the sentence of their condemnation will proceed, might be shewn to be in and of themselves, perversely departing from the love of the truth of the word of God; and by having pleasure in unrighteousness, they had recourse to those lyes and impostures which gave them support and comfort in their wickedness.

In St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy he puts him in mind of the instruction he had given him at Ephesus, to charge some, *that they teach no other doctrine*, but what they had heard from him: and in this Epistle he repeats this injunction, that he should *so do*, by enjoining those who were under his care, *that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables*, the rabbinical traditional fables, *and endless genealogies*, traced up by the Jews, to assert the privileges they claimed by their natural descent from Abraham, and the patriarchs of their nation; which sort of disquisitions *minister questions rather than edifying, which is in faith*.

But in regard to those judaizing Christians, who mean to keep up the law given by Moses, as of continual obligation under the Christian dispensation, which they would infer was principally designed for its support, the apostle proceeds to speak particularly to this point.

Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

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The end of the moral law or commandment, given by divine authority, is to promote charity, that great Christian grace, consisting in the love of God, and of men, according to his will; which grace arises out of a pure heart, cleansed from all sensual or carnal motives, and is the offspring of true piety, and of a good conscience well informed of divine truth, and of faith unfeigned; *from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling*; from which end, and these qualifications which are necessary to pursue it, some having swerved through corrupt motives, have turned aside to vain ostentatious philosophical speeches and systems, *desiring to be teachers of the law of nature, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*; they desire to make shew of their abilities as teachers of the law of nature, without understanding or being aware of that cheat they would impose upon themselves and others, in affirming and maintaining the perfection or sufficiency of that law.

But we know the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; but although the law of nature is abrogated, and set aside by the Christian covenant, yet we who live under that dispensation know how good and profitable the law is, if a man use it lawfully, without going beyond its lawful intention, for the present order and support of society, to maintain its temporal power and authority; *knowing this, that the law of nature, which is the moral law transcribed and enforced by human constitutions, under the sanctions of temporal rewards and punishments, is not made for a righteous man, who has a more perfect law of liberty to walk by in the gospel of Christ, but for the lawless and disobedient to the word of God, for the ungodly and sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for lyars, for perjured persons*; and if there be any other thing which is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

All

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All these offenders, who are lawless and disobedient to the spiritual law of the gospel, are not to be kept in order at present without enforcing the moral law under its temporal sanctions, to take hold upon them for committing those disorders, and for any other wicked practice condemned by the gospel of Christ, which has perfected and extended our obligation to moral or social duties beyond the limits of the law of nature.

The apostle proceeds again in the ivth chapter of this epistle to give a further account of the adversaries of the gospel.

Now the spirit of prophecy speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth; which are marks belonging to the Romish church. And in his second epistle to Timothy, This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, beady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such turn away.

All these sorts of persons will conspire by their endeavours to oppose and pervert the truth, although they may preserve outward respect towards it under a form of godliness, counterfeited by hypocrisy to serve their present purposes in this life. And further he adds, *The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables, invented for their amusement by the craftiness of the adversary.*

In

xxviii *The* PREFATORY DISCOURSE.

In the Second Epistle General of St. Peter, he tells the Christians of his days, *There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, or heresies of perdition; an expression marking out the malignity and dangerous consequences of those heresies which are ascertained or pointed out by the characteristic of their teachers; even denying the Lord that bought them; that is, denying or depriving their Saviour of the honour due to his NAME, as their Lord God, and bring upon themselves swift destruction; and many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of; and through covetousness shall they with feigned words, spoken in favour of the truth, make merchandize of you, in taking the charge of you, as of goods in merchandize, to make money by them.*

Again, in the same epistle he warns them, *That there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation; and this lye, though a very shallow one, when examined, is yet in the deepest reasonings of all scoffing libertines, who do not fear God, because his hand does not instantly take hold upon them in the fact of their wickedness.*

In the General Epistle of St. John, the adversaries of the gospel are mentioned under the name of Antichrist, or Antichrists.

1 John, ii. 18. *Little children, it is the last time, or the last hour, the critical and important hour of your trial, in which it concerns you much to be on your guard against those assaults that will be made upon you; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, the great adversary of your faith, to exert his utmost endeavours to overturn it, even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, after they had been for some time considered as Christians among us; but they were not of us, in reality they were not believers; for if they had been*

been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us ; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. And again, Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ ? He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father : but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also.

By which words of St. John, confirming our faith in the Father and in the Son, we are warned chiefly of the ARIAN or ANTICHRISTIAN heresy, by which the abettors of it aim at some distinction of their own invention, to hinder the purpose of the Father, *that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

Again ; The Apostle exhorts his children in the faith, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God,* by examining their pretensions by his word ; *because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby ye know the Spirit of God : Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.* For the incarnation of the Son of God, and the redemption of Mankind consequent upon it, is that great article of faith, which comprehends or contains in it the whole sum of all true religion, which is conveyed to us by the Spirit of God ; *and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God : and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.*

As our Lord had given notice to his disciples of the tares sowed by the enemy among the wheat, they are careful also, in the course of their ministry, to apprise their hearers of these tares, *the children of the wicked one,* growing up among them ; and, in consequence of this notice, they warn them of the great dangers they would be exposed to, from the assaults that would be made upon them by the enemy, through the industry of his children, to undermine their faith, to oppose and set aside the great purpose of God's mercy, in the sending of his Son into the world for the salvation of mankind ;
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which design, we are told, would be carried on by such persons as St. John calls Antichrist, or Antichrists; that is, heretical adversaries, under various names of distinction from one another, but all united under one head, *that denieth the Father and the Son*, by sundry inventions and false arguments, attempting the divinity, the honour, the word, and the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, thereby to make way for their own word and authority, to take place in part, or in the whole, of that holy religion delivered to us by the Son of God, which we receive through faith in his name.

In the second Epistle of St. John he says, *Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; this is a deceiver, and an Antichrist.*

To conclude these remarks upon the prophetic history of the adversaries of the Christian faith, we may observe, that the book of the Revelation of St. John is written to give timely notice to the servants of God, of the opposition and persecution that his church must undergo, both by temporal and spiritual afflictions and distresses brought upon it before the second coming of our Lord: but after the utmost power of the enemy of truth is exerted to defeat its influence, and notwithstanding the great success he would meet with in deceiving the world by his impostures; yet this opposition and persecution of the servants of God would finally cease and determine by a compleat victory, manifested in the utter destruction of all their enemies, the opposers of the will of God, and of his truth, when the apostates are making their last effort in rebellion, as they are described in strong images of prophetic history: *And they went upon the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the Saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God, and devoured them; and the devil that deceived them was cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet, that is, all such persons as have been led into disobedience*
by

by their fleshly lusts, and continued in it, and they who have been false teachers, perverting the word of God, *are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

By comparing the providential history of the adversaries of the Christian religion with the attempts that have been made against it, in the course of their impostures appearing in the world as foretold by the Holy Spirit, we have strong confirmation of our faith in God's word, arising from the opposition and subtil practices of the enemy, bringing evidence to the truth through his attempts to undermine and to supplant it. For all his artifice is discovered from the very beginning of his work; and the generation of error, in the successive progress of impostures, rising one out of another, has been clearly discerned by the divine omniscience, and is laid before us in the holy scriptures, which are therefore profitable, not only for our instruction in righteousness, but also for reproof and correction of all the enemies of our holy religion, whose designs and crafty purposes are laid open in them. So that the whole compass of the imposture, howsoever complicated in error, by the crooked paths pursued by the adversaries of the truth, is naked to the all-seeing eyes of God; and the generation of the children of the enemy, or the instruments under his direction, for propagating offences and scandals against the truth, have but a limited time for their work, until their principle reverts back upon itself, and the error has its end, at that point from which the enemy set out, in CONTRADICTION TO THE WORD OF GOD.

Hence it is, that the inspired writers of the New Testament speak of this opposition as falling within a small compass of time. So St. Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29. *The time is short*: and St. John, in the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. And again, c. xii. 12. *Wo to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because*

cause he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And accordingly in that book of emblematical images, the spiritual actions and efforts of the adversaries of the truth of the Christian religion are declared, together with those consequences that attend their workings, subject to God's merciful and providential government of the world, until judgment is finally passed and executed upon them.

But although these things must shortly come to pass, yet so great is the subtilty and intricacy of error, upheld and propagated by the various complications of falshood, addressed, and insinuated, and blended with human reasonings upon the truth of Christ's religion, through the arts of the enemy, to preclude its influence upon the understandings of men, that no man upon earth, by his natural sagacity, nor even the angels in heaven, nor the Son of Man, according to the purity of his human understanding, could precisely discern at what period of time the opposition of error should cease, and judgment should follow, in consequence of it, upon the great deceiver and his instruments in that work; and so our Lord has declared, *Of that DAY knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*; or, as St. Mark has recorded his words, *Of that DAY and that HOUR knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven; neither the Son, but the Father.*

This observation concerning the shortness of the time, from the birth unto the end of all impostures that can be propagated by the enemy, to supplant the truth, gives us light to understand the true reason, why our Lord gave the signs of his second coming to judgment, at the same time that he spake also concerning the dissolution and destruction of the Jewish state, St. Matthew xxiv. and St. Mark xiii. for in the sight of God a thousand years are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night; and therefore those two events are connected by the resemblance of circumstances attending them: for the opposition made at
first

first to the gospel by the unbelieving Jews, in support of the Mosaical dispensation, which brought on the destruction of their church and state, does resemble or correspond to the opposition made in the last days to corrupt and supplant the gospel revelation, by the enemies of it maintaining the excellency and perfection of the Law of Nature, which is also the sum or substance of the Mosaical dispensation: and so the unbelievers, at both these periods, being surprized with judgment coming upon them at the destruction of Jerusalem, or at the end of the world, are compared to the persons who lived in the days of Noah, who would take no warning by his preaching, but rejected his prophecy of their destruction, as the unbelieving Jews did the preaching of the Messiah, or the infidels, in after ages, the ministration of his word by his gospel.

But the chief design of the providential history of the enemies of our religion, and of the means they employ to subvert it, is to give us such notice of their purposes, that we may be duly attentive to withstand their assaults, and be ready in our own defence, with those weapons which are necessary for our spiritual warfare.

As the great apostacy of mankind arose from doubting and disbelief in the word of God, the purpose of the enemy still continues to lead us astray from it, that by his persuasions and allurements we may seek for our happiness by such methods as best agree with our own reason, exercised and employed about the things of this life; and therefore, since we are apprized of the subtil artifices of our adversaries, we must not join with them, to decide the controversy by admitting their principles: and because they are bold to gainsay and reject the word of God, it does not follow, that we should therefore accept their challenge, and agree to such terms of combat as they are pleased to propose to us; *for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, such as might be furnished by our own inventions, but mighty through God to the pulling down strong-holds.*

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If we are indeed the soldiers and servants of Christ, we must observe his discipline, and his example, in contending with our spiritual enemies, taking *the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God*; for if we are prevailed upon to lay aside this weapon, and to use any other in our defence, the enemy has gained already, by his subtilty, the very point he means to contend for, which is, to separate us from our faith in God's word, that we may boast ourselves falsely of innate strength or soundness in our own understandings, and thereby forfeit the comfort and support of the holy Spirit in our spiritual trials and conflicts. So that in regard to the particular assaults which every Christian must expect to meet with in his passage through this deceitful and sinful world, we are fully apprized by our blessed Master, of that discipline we must observe for enabling us to withstand them, as it is set forth at large by his Apostle St. Paul, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, which contains a wonderful lesson of instruction in spiritual exercise and discipline for our warfare, in wrestling against those dangerous adversaries whom he describes, when he tells us, *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*; and therefore he is very earnest in apprizing us to have no confidence in our own weapons of defence, but to *put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*. And so great are the dangers we have to encounter, that, upon due consideration of our enemies, he repeats it again, *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,*
which

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which is the word of God : praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

This zealous and affectionate admonition of the Apostle is given to awaken our attention, and to sound the alarm of our danger, as surrounded on every side by the subtil policies and power of the enemy, ever watchful to surprize and assault, if he finds we are not ready to withstand him ; and so great is our danger, that even they who are the best armed and disciplined, are sure to be attempted, and find it hard, *having done all, to stand.*

But this warning of the Apostle is exploded and ridiculed by the wise men, the children of the sun-shine of this world, who mean to walk by sight of their own eyes, for the enjoyment of what they like best at the present time, *who have said, in the self-sufficiency of their own wisdom, With our lips will we prevail ; our lips are our own : who is Lord over us ? They know not, neither will they understand the word of truth, to deceive and deliver them from their own vain imaginations ; but they chuse to be deceived, and they walk on still in darkness ; all the foundations of the earth are out of course.*

The worldly men have set uppermost the principle of their own knowledge, which ought to be kept down by the word of God, enlightening their understandings by his truth ; and in consequence of their pride and obstinacy, in refusing to be instructed by it, the Psalmist has declared the dismal condition of such men, after the short day of this life is ended ; *Like sheep they are laid in the grave, having minded nothing else but their bellies while they lived : death shall feed on them, having its full effect upon them without hope, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning of the resurrection ; and their beauty, the faded flower of temporal transitory joys and possessions, shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. Man that is*
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xxxvi *The* PREFATORY DISCOURSE.

in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

These words of holy scripture are profitable for correction of such mistaken, deluded, blinded sinners, who walk on presumptuously, as they are guided through their own self-will by the *rulers of the darkness of this world.*

But if they will not be reprov'd or amended, by what is spoken to them out of the word of God, we must not give up his authority as ineffectual, and so betake ourselves to arguments derived from our own authority for their conviction: and because they will not hearken to gospel arguments, we must not therefore join issue, and contend with them by the Law of Reason or of Nature; for after this concession, the enemy has no more to fear, and the longer our arguments are continued, so much the better for his purposes; for our pride and our passions will come in to his assistance, and the dispute can never have any end unfavourable to his designs.

For the same reason we must *take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*, as the only weapon that can decide our controversy with all heretical opposers of the truth; for the only method of deciding any controversy, is to bring it to a certain point, beyond which we cannot pass; and that point, with all true believers, is the authority of the word of God, upon which alone we rely for establishing the articles of our faith; and therefore, in all controversial disputes with the enemies of it, our duty requires that we should appeal to that authority by taking the word of God, *as it is written* in his book, and offer it only in our defence, without any addition of our own reasoning along with it, but leave it to the consciences of our adversaries to make the application.

We are not to suppose, that the enemies of our religion will be silenced by this method of our address; for this supposition would imply their acquiescence in the AUTHORITY of the word of God, which is the point they

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they mean to evade by their discourse, howsoever they may, by good words and fair speeches, pretend to respect it.

But if our adversaries are not silenced, they can never gain any advantage over us, until we strive for victory, by our own reasonings, in which we are sure to be intangled by the policies of the enemy, and bring advantage to his cause by unwary concession.

This observation will explain the advice given by St. Paul to Titus, iii. 10. *A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject: knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* And therefore the conscience of such a person is to be awakened by admonition of his guilt: for as a man cannot be a HERETIC, without being informed and instructed in the truth, from which he wilfully departs, to follow an opinion contrary to it; so there is no need of arguments to convince him of the truth, which by supposition he is well enough acquainted with, as was the case of those converts of whom St. Paul was then speaking, who had learned the gospel by his preaching among them.

And the like is the case of all other Heretics, in the succeeding ages of the church, who are taught by the written word of God; and therefore if they do not acquiesce in its divine authority, when it is proposed to them *as it is written*, we have no need of arguments to enforce it by our authority, in reasoning any farther upon it; but *a man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition*, given him to forbear, *speaking perverse things, reject*: turn away from him, and refuse to hold any more conversation with him.

This direction is clearly confirmed by the example of our blessed Lord in his conflict with the great adversary of the truth, who acknowledged its divine authority in holy scripture, in order to set it at variance with itself, and thereby to subvert it through his attempt upon our gracious Redeemer, who, after his baptism, and previously to his entrance upon his prophetic of-

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fice, was led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil; and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered; and when the tempter came to him, he said, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* The enemy knew that our Lord had received the attestation of his being the Son of God, by a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;* and therefore he assaulted him, by pretending a doubt or disbelief of his divine power, unless at his instance he would work a miracle, and proposed such an one, as at that time he should most incline to work, by the pains of hunger then urgent upon him. So that by this address of the enemy, doubting and disbelieving the divinity of our Lord, he was tempted to vindicate the honour due to his human nature, as united to God, by such a method as would have been to the injury of his divine nature, in a compliance with that method of conviction which the adversary had proposed, or provoked him to give.

Here it is remarkable, that the devil was the first mover in framing a doubt of the divinity of our Lord; *But he answered, and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* By which answer our Lord rejected the temptation, and refused any gratification to him, who was already apprized of the truth; and therefore so far as the proposal concerned himself, in the present distress of his condition, he gave a proof of his faith in God for his support, independently of the outward means of bodily sustenance or refreshment.

In order to make another trial for accomplishing the same purpose, *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

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The tempter, in this proposal, has recourse to divine authority, for seconding his advice; but the authority is falsely quoted, and deceitfully applied; yet, without making these remarks upon it, our Lord again baffles the adversary, by a direct application from the word of God: *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,* to any unnecessary manifestations of his power.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give unto thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Here again there was room for argument to convict the adversary of the falshood of his promises, and to shew the vanity of those imaginations and desires, which he has address to raise in the hearts of men, when they are deluded to purchase the glories of this world by complying with the policies of his kingdom: but admitting what the tempter said to be true, which our Lord disdained to contradict, he rejects the proposal with a rebuke, adding also the expresse testimony of scripture for his purpose: *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

In this method of arguing, after our Lord's example, against the adversaries of our faith, the controversy with them is quickly ended, by resting its issue upon the authority of the word of God. For although they have recourse to the word of God also, and quote its authority, in order to subvert it; for establishing their own opinions, we are not warranted to proceed any farther against them; since by this method the appeal is made to his tribunal, who will, in due time, convict and silence the gainsayers of his truth.

But in the mean time, we are not left without sufficient light to *beware of false prophets*, who make profession of teaching the word of God, which they mean to contradict; for besides their departure from the

plain, clear, and consistent testimony of the holy scriptures, they give another proof of their infidelity, by their attempts of establishing the Law of our own Reason, or of Nature; *Wherefore*, our Lord has told us, *By their fruits ye shall know them*. Among these fruits all inventions are to be reckoned which have successively appeared to amuse the understandings of men; particularly those inventions of the latter days, which have been propagated to lead them astray from the truth, by subtil arts of a specious benevolent address, to give encouragement to make out for themselves a rule of life, agreeable to their own way of thinking, according to the fitness of things, or from the moral sense or taste, to fall in love with virtue, by ideas of order and beauty, and to talk of religion with wit and good humour; and so to live by rule of some one conceit or other, which terminates at length in the mode or fashion of the times; by which every man may be pleased to walk as he would chuse, under the sanction of the authority of false prophets, who have done what they could to oppose the truth, and, in consequence of their endeavours, have taught their disciples to be Free-thinkers, Moral Philosophers, Deists, Atheists, Libertines, or Rationalists; or to rank under any denomination of heretics they like best, provided they agree to forfeit their title of being Christian believers, and to preserve only some outward decency towards the name, answerable to *sheeps cloathing*, for the sake of worldly purposes, and on account of what they call prejudice in the minds of other men, who have learned to fear God, and to have due respect to the religion of Christ.

If it could be done, there is no need of pointing out severally the numberless treatises which have been written with this design, to make men *lovers of their own selves*, through the applauded sufficiency of their own wit and wisdom, and of course *lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God*; for he that has due regard to the authority of the holy scriptures, by being conversant in

in them, will quickly discern the tendency of all such workers as mean to oppose them ; and these are easily distinguished also, by their fruits, from other men, who, through want of suspicion, or by unwary concessions, made to the usurped authority of false teachers, have come to take part in errors or opinions favourable to the purposes and the policies of the old deceiver.

It was needful to take notice of the work of one author, who is mentioned in the following refutation of his performance, because it is singular in its kind ; for although in other contests with advocates for the truth, he had acknowledged the authority of holy scripture decisive, and therefore he might speedily be refuted, (after his mustering of texts to set forth holy scripture at variance with itself, by his comment in favour of the Deistical, Arian, Semiarian, or Socinian fraternity) ; yet in that treatise, wherein he means to exalt the powers of human reasoning to such an absolute sufficiency, as to have no need of revelation for the discovery of the true God, and our duty to him, he has professedly set aside the authority of holy scripture, in managing this argument, that he might shew us the way to become mathematical or mechanical Christians, instead of believers.

Hence it was necessary to shew, that his demonstrations are not mathematical, and that his pretences to establish the truth are in order to subvert it ; and when he tells us how to walk by sight, and not by faith, that we have just cause to beware of his authority, and so keep ourselves of the same number with St. Paul and his brethren, who *walk by faith, and not by sight*.

After this short view of the opposition made to the truth by the adversaries of it, as they and their attempts are described in sacred providential history, we may now be enabled to discern after what manner, and by what means, the accomplishment of our Lord's promise, concerning the conversion of the Jewish nation, has been delayed by it.

Although

Although the Gentiles were converted in great numbers to the Christian faith, after it was rejected by the body of the Jewish nation, *who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and persecuted their brethren*, the disciples of our Lord, and so *the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost* destruction of their temple and city, and the utter subversion of their ecclesiastical and civil polity ; yet this example of God's wrath, executed upon that nation for rejecting their Messiah, did not preclude the subtil purposes of the adversary of truth, in prosecuting the same design for perverting the converted Gentiles from the purity of the Christian faith, and so to make way for introducing again the same Law of Works, which had been set aside in the Jewish dispensation ; for these attempts were carried on under the forms of those heresies which appeared soon after the first churches were planted by the preaching of the Apostles : and even at the time of their preaching, St. Paul has told us, *The mystery of iniquity doth already work*, which he observed in his Epistles to the Christian churches.

The various heretical leaders, and their followers, who have successively infested the Christian church, from the time our blessed Lord began his ministry, by an opposition to his truth, which we know will continue unto the end of this world, although they are seemingly distinct, and separated from each other ; yet they have all agreed in one and the same design, that is, by some opinions of their own, to degrade, or diminish, or to set aside the authority of our blessed Lord in his church, and the honour due to his name and to his word ; and so to make way for their own authority to bring in that law which they think reasonable, or suitable and convenient to their present purposes, accordingly as they compute their respects or relations to God, and to each other in this life ; that is, in other words, to establish the principle or sanction of the law of Moses, or the Law of Nature, which answers all the purposes of the enemy of our salvation, who

knows

knows we are told in the word of God, that *by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh justified in his sight*. But this design of the adversary leading on to his purposes, was more especially concealed in those contests set on foot by the artifice of heretics, disputing the divine nature of Christ; for they succeeded wonderfully in baffling the understandings of men by subtilities of conceits, and by new inventions, varying the form of opposition, which was still directed to one and the same end, in destroying the authority and influence of the word of God upon their minds, who gave any attention or credit to their impostures.

This end is thoroughly discovered and obviated in the holy writings, that nothing may be wanting to their sufficiency, particularly in this point of which we are now speaking, which is clearly manifested in the gospel according to St. John, who wrote the latest of the inspired penmen, and consequently the nearest to the time of the *falling away first* of a great part of the eastern church by the Arian heresy; for he introduces the gospel he wrote of Jesus Christ, by telling us of him, *In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God*. Many more such words might be added from the sacred writers; but if these words are not sufficient to obviate and to expose the purposes of the Arian heretics, and to prove to them the divine nature and authority of our Lord, no other arguments are due to them; and they are in no respect to be deemed differing from the Jews rejecting their Messiah. Therefore, in the eastern parts of the Roman empire, where this *falling away first* from the true faith did prevail, the Jews have not had a fitting invitation to come into the Christian church, which had relapsed into their error and apostacy.

Again, Such is the perverse generation of error, that one heretic has produced another, contrary or contradictory to himself: thus we are told, that Sabellius begat Arius, as one of the ecclesiastical historians has observed: "Indeed, Arius, unable to refute the opi-
nion

"nion of Sabellius the Lybian, fell from the true
 "faith, and asserted the Son of God to be a new
 "God." *Socrates Scholast.* B. IV. C. 33.

From this heresy of Arius, which sprang up in the east, assisted with the labours of many other contradictory heretics, all conspiring to dispute for the mastery over the Christian faith, the greatest corruption, and most permanent opposition, and almost universal apostacy from the faith, took their rise in the west, in the perverse generation of those principles, and errors, and blasphemous pretensions, which mark out the character of *that man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* Which description clearly distinguishes the head of the corrupted Roman church from all other arch heretics, by the loftiness of his usurped authority, and the blasphemous pretence of self-sufficiency in power temporal and spiritual.

And whereas other heresies have been fluctuating and variable in their forms, by new branches springing up from their roots, under different denominations; this great apostacy of the western Roman church has been preserved under one form, an IDOL of the human form, and accordingly was marked out in the term *That MAN of SIN, the son of perdition*, which was not to appear, but in consequence of preceding defections among the members of the Christian church, by which the opportunity would be given to the adversary, which he would seize upon by his artifice, that the *MAN of SIN be revealed, the son of perdition; and then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*

So we find, according to sacred prophetic history, that the pretensions of the bishop of Rome to an absolute authority over the faith and church of Christ were admitted, after *a falling away first*, under colour of
 quieting

quieting and composing contending parties, who had made appeals to his judgment; and in order to silence heretics, which was a vain attempt, but seemingly expedient for the peace of the church, a new invention was set on foot to take away all authority from the word of God, and give it to *him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders*, to establish the all-sufficiency and authority of his tribunal. Thus it was that the authority of holy Writ came to be suspended by this imposture, and the doctrines of the Romish church over-ruled the consciences of men, believing a lye in its stead. Which circumstance also is pointed out by the apostle thrice using the term (revealed) on this occasion; *and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time: and then shall that wicked be revealed*. For the authority of divine revelation upon the minds of men was set aside, and in its place those revelations of infernal policy came up, which have supported the mock ensigns of temporal and spiritual power in that church.

They who are free from that strong delusion that has so long prevailed over the greater part of the western Roman empire, under the tyranny of papal usurpation, are apt to be astonished and at a loss in accounting how it comes to pass that the votaries of the Romish church, even the most accute and learned members of it in human literature, should yet be held in such wretched ignorance and subjection, as to believe in lyes and impostures of the most gross and palpable compositions and complexions, and so to prostitute their faith and their consciences, as to embrace every artful tale which is propagated under the authority or seal of that church; but when we observe the cause of this monstrous credulity, our wondering at it should cease; for in regard to our spiritual concerns, we have no UNDERSTANDING, no sure prop or stay for our minds to rest upon, but what is furnished by the WORD of GOD; and therefore when we part with our understanding in the

word of God, and resign his book out of our hands under a feigned pretence, as if we could not understand what God has said to us in it, we are then ready to be led what way the merciless adversary of our souls shall chuse; and so it follows that he has unlimited success *with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish from the true faith, because they received not the love of the truth, by holding it fast when it was put into their hands, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye,* any lye whatsoever that is offered to them by that false authority to which they have submitted their consciences.

It is obvious to remark the great resemblance which appears in the outward forms of the Jewish and Romish churches, corresponding nearly even as to the vestments of the high priest; and the parallel is easily drawn between the Jewish and Papal Antichrist, as may be seen at large by a late commentator, Dr. Whitby, on 2 Theff. ii. or we may take a short sketch of it in the words of a late writer on the Nature of the Christian Priesthood, page 78.

“ From the genius and nature of the Christian religion and priesthood, we see the gross mistake and
 “ impiety of the Romish doctrines, whose guides endeavour to bring us back to the antiquated Jewish
 “ symbolical religion, by recalling us to one as ceremonious and intricate as theirs, and introducing a
 “ blasphemous sacrifice of Christ’s body, his living body, contrary to all the solemn declarations of the
 “ New Testament, that he was once offered and is no
 “ more to be repeated; and although the principal end
 “ of the gospel be to induce men to the practice of
 “ solid virtue and internal holiness, they have so far
 “ mistaken or perverted its design, as instead thereof
 “ to substitute innumerable commutations of penances,
 “ pilgrimages, indulgences, and such outward bodily
 “ exercises as have quite outdone the Jewish rites,
 “ translating the religion of Christ from the inward
 “ to

“to the outward man, from the spirit to the flesh,
“from the soul to the body.”

But the corruption of the Romish church has gone yet farther in corresponding with paganism, by introducing the religious worship of angels and saints, or souls of departed men, together with their idolatrous images and representations.

So long as these corruptions continue to be propagated and practised in the Romish church, the members of it under that strong delusion cannot be accounted in the sight of God the servants and followers of Christ, because they call upon his name, Lord, Lord, or assemble together for worshipping in some church which is called after the name of St. Peter or St. John his apostles; for in this way of compliance the heathens might come in also to be called Christians, who would sacrifice to a heathen god in the church of St. Peter or All Saints at Rome, instead of sacrificing in a temple dedicated to any one, or to the honour of all the fictitious divinities of their gods and goddesses: therefore as the members of the western Roman church have fallen off from the purity of the Christian faith, and have apostatised in doctrine and discipline to the corrupted Jewish church, the Jews can have no proper invitation from them to embrace the Christian faith, and to forsake the delusion of their error and apostacy.

But through the especial favour of Almighty God vouchsafed to these kingdoms, the pure and uncorrupted doctrine and discipline of the Christian church is established among us, by the temporal power of the state conspiring to uphold them under the sacred authority and warrant of holy scripture, which is restored and recommended to all the sons of this church, faithfully translated into their own language, to become the rule of their faith and practice; and so they are taught by her, “That whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be
“proved thereby, is not to be required of any man
“that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be
“thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” Hence
all

all her children are intreated and encouraged to exercise themselves in searching the scriptures, and to compare what they are taught by the ministers of God in this church, with what they find written in his book, that their obligations may arise from their own consciences, clearly informed by the word of God in their duty to him and to one another : so that we have sure grounds to speak of her in the same terms with St. Paul, when he said of himself, *I am pure from the blood of all men ; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

Again, If we examine and compare the constitution of this church with the antient Jewish church, we shall find it the same it was in the days of David, according to the book of Psalms, in pure and spiritual worship, setting aside the figurative typical representations of *good things to come*, which were then shadowed out by the ceremonial observances of the law, and are now done away by those *good things* being come in reality and in substance, when our redemption was accomplished by the life and sufferings, and the death, and the glorious resurrection and ascension of our blessed Redeemer.

Further, The Liturgy of our church agrees also to the reformed church of the Jewish nation, in the service of the synagogue, as constituted by Ezra, after the return from the captivity ; for in their synagogues the scriptures were read by way of lessons, and explained by preaching upon them ; and in them a public liturgy, or form of prayers, were used at their assemblies for divine worship, at which our Lord and his Apostles were frequently present, and consequently approved of what was done in them ; and according to their approbation, the reformed Christian church, established in England and Ireland, is now constituted, agreeably to the model of the pure and primitive Jewish church ; for in our churches the Law, and the Prophets, and the Psalms are constantly read, and explained by preaching : and so the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus

Jesus Christ is introduced, as containing the evidences of the accomplishment of the promises made unto the fathers of the Jewish nation, and of the fulfilling what was written in the Law, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning their Messiah, the Saviour and Deliverer of all mankind.

From this comparative view of the correspondence between the antient and the reformed Jewish church, and the present reformed Christian church, we must conclude there is no bar, no hindrance, or offence, lying in the way, on account of the doctrine or discipline established in the church of England, to hinder the Jews from acknowledging, that the faithful sons of this church are descended from the pure and primitive Jewish church, and that they are the children of the fathers of the Jewish nation in the true faith, having the same hope in the promises made to them of the Messiah, whom we acknowledge as their's and our anointed King, and Priest, and Prophet, who came in *the fulness of time*, according to the purposes of divine wisdom, and goodness, and power, by his life and sufferings, and triumph over death, in his glorious resurrection, *to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness*; and so to establish the kingdom of God upon earth, that the kingdoms of this world may become *the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ*, the usurpation and tyranny of the evil spirit by sin and death being destroyed, through the merits and the mediation of our holy Redeemer.

After our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and immediately before his ascension into heaven, we find the last question which was put to him by his disciples, did relate to this great event, the conversion of the Jewish nation to the faith in him; for to this purpose we are told by the divine historian: *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the father hath put in his own power;*

but ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you ; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

These words do sufficiently intimate to us, that we also should forbear any vain enquiry about the time or the season, when it may please God to awaken the attention of that people, to acknowledge their king in our Lord Jesus Christ, that by their obedience to him, he may *restore again the kingdom to Israel*. But as the happiness of all the kingdoms of the earth is connected with this great event, we of these kingdoms are more especially concerned to contribute our endeavours to the furtherance of it ; because we know assuredly, that if the prejudices of that people were removed, and *the veil* taken away, which is upon their heart, they would come into the reformed Christian church, which is among us ; therefore our endeavours should be directed to remove their prejudices, that, by the assistance of God's grace, the *veil* may be taken away from their heart.

For this purpose we have seen already, there is nothing more necessary to be done in behalf of the truth, which by the wonderful providence of God is come to be acknowledged and supported in the reformed established church of these kingdoms ; so that in opposition to all the power and policies of the enemy of truth, and the incessant unwearied endeavours of men, guided by his principles, to supplant, and overturn, or bear it down, or to shake the foundation, or in some way or other at least to move it, the foundation of this church, since it became reformed, has continued immoveable ; and so we are assured by the authority of God's word, on which it rests, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

But as the Christian church was at first planted by the gospel of salvation, delivered in the sermons of our blessed Lord and his Apostles, so it was propagated by their lives bearing witness to the truth ; for it was by
their

their examples, in suffering what the malice of the enemy could inflict upon them by his instruments in this life, that they overcame the stubborn prejudices of men, who are all, by their corrupted nature, at enmity with the truth, and thereby disposed to resist and to withstand it; therefore, according to the wisdom and goodness of God, *it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings.* So his example became unexceptionably perfect to all his followers, when he endured in his own person more grief, and sorrows, and bodily pain, than any of them will have to encounter in their Christian course.

And in like manner his Apostles rejoiced in their sufferings for the glory of his name, to convert and establish their brethren in the Christian faith.

If we are faithful to our master, the same task is before us, to walk as he did, resisting the temptations which are thrown in our way by the industry of our spiritual enemy; and particularly with respect to the Jewish nation, that we may invite them into the Christian church, it is our duty to convince them, by our words and our actions corresponding, that we are indeed the followers of our blessed Lord, whose name we have taken upon us, and in whose service we profess to be engaged.

The case of the Jewish nation at present is the same with that of any mere natural man, determined by his reason, exercised upon outward things, in experience of the pleasures and pains of sense, to seek for his rest and happiness in this life; in which purpose that people has been confirmed by the temporal promises of the law, putting *the veil* of sensual pleasures and enjoyments on their heart, *which veil is done away in Christ.* But even unto this day, when *Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart; nevertheless, when it shall turn unto the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.* That is, when the heart of that people is turned unto the Lord, to seek for their

rest and happiness in a future state, according to the promise of God made to all mankind in Christ the Messiah, the veil shall be taken away, as the difficulty in understanding the method of divine wisdom, in accomplishing the salvation of the world, by the Jewish nation taken to be the peculiar people of God, will then be removed, and that people will then see clearly, that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, whether of the Jewish nation or of the Gentiles: so that our duty as Christians, to guide the Jews into the church of Christ, does imply, that we should teach no other doctrine, nor uphold any other authority, in publishing to them the terms of salvation, than what is derived to our discourses from the word of God, which sets aside all our own wisdom and righteousness by the Law of Nature, or of Works, as of no account to justify us in his sight; and at the same time that we disclaim our own righteousness, and with it acknowledge the insufficiency of the first covenant made with the Jewish nation, that we may lead them to embrace the terms of the NEW COVENANT of grace, our eyes and our hearts must be fixed on the promises given by that covenant, to bring us to everlasting happiness, after our short passage through the troubles of this evil world is finished, in stedfast obedience to the will of our blessed Lord.

The first promise made in our name, upon our admission into the Christian church, "To renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh," does clearly express the duty of self-denial, which is, to both Jews and Gentiles, *a stumbling stone, and rock of offence*, and so continues to be in all ages of the world, by the artifice and industry of the devil, conspiring to betray us into his ways and works, thro' the deceitfulness of our own hearts: and to bring about his purposes, this stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, is wonderfully magnified by his lies and impostures that are set out upon it. But if our understandings

are enlightened by the word of divine truth, a very little attention to the course of this evil world may convince us of the deceitfulness of the address and insinuations of the enemy, when we compare some of his poor men, and their sufferings and self-denials, with the sufferings of God's poor, in their passage through the world.

So great is the enticement, or, as it may be called, the enchantment of an imagination wandering after the honours, or pleasures, or riches, or power of this world, that the poor man, who it may be is already overcharged, and surfeited, and overlaid by heaps of wealth, or titles of honour, or pomps, or pageants of earthly grandeur, in variety of all sorts of sensual delights, is nevertheless still eager and ambitious, still craving and thirsty, anxious, impatient, and insatiable; and so he is reckoned among the poor men of the god of this world, having no rest, and not satisfied with the meat that perisheth, be the store of it never so great in his hands; and to finish this hungry, restless state, he comes to die without hope: whereas God *satisfieth his poor with bread*, that endureth to everlasting life: for howbeit, according to the conditions of their entrance into his service, they may be poorly fed, and hardly treated, and sorely bruised, and despitefully handled, through the policies of the god of this world; yet although they are *sorrowful*, they are *always rejoicing* with some hidden inward comfort and support; for they have some spiritual food for their refreshment, which other men know not of; and if so be they are brought to suffer death, for the sake of their Lord, he does not fail to support his poor at that hour to withstand the utmost fury of the enemy.

It very much concerns us to take a diligent survey of this rock of offence, behind which the enemy lies hid, casting forth his weapons to assault our faith; for it is from this quarter he is bold in assailing the servants of God, by raising up fears and jealousies, with doubtfulness and suspicions of danger, to dishearten

and discourage them in their spiritual conflicts, that they may give way in time of temptation, and comply with the lusts of the flesh, or of the spirit, in carrying on his designs.

It is also from that same quarter, that the instruments of his policy are taught to scoff at religion, to pass off their mocks, and jests, and scorn upon it ; for so the evil spirit finds his advantage to persuade the unwary children of the world, that we are not, nor cannot be so constituted, as to have that indifference and disengagement which is required in a Christian towards this world, and the things of this world.

The truth is, that rock of offence is unsurmountable by the mere strength of our own resolution ; and so much we must confess, before we can be enabled to get over it. But after this confession and acknowledgment of our own weakness, which, by God's grace, will direct us to seek and to obtain assistance from him, the difficulty in our way will be removed under his guidance ; our spirits will be comforted by his holy spirit, and our hands strengthened by holding his weapons, to defeat all the power of the adversary.

So we find, that they who have gone before us in the true faith of Christ, who has led them up to that rock of offence, darkened and surrounded by all the terrors, and tempests, and frightful colourings of the enemy, have been able to triumph over the utmost efforts of his malice, to dispossess him of the power he had obtained over their imaginations, and so to hold fast, in opposition to him, the profession of their faith without wavering, as to make little account of all the sufferings they met with in this life, in the way to that joy which they knew was at hand.

It was to remove this rock of offence out of our way, that our blessed Lord himself submitted to be slain by the malice of the enemy, and triumphed over him by his sufferings ; and therefore to make advantage by his example, in pursuing the path he has marked out for us by his steps, the Jews and Gentiles are called upon

upon to follow him, the Captain of their Salvation, to his kingdom in heaven, by having their hearts and affections set *upon things above, and not on things on the earth.*

When the Jews and Gentiles have agreed to live by this principle of heavenly wisdom, they will both repent of the follies of their own hearts, seeking in vain for happiness in this life; and by this agreement they will conspire with the design of the coming of their Messiah, to give *glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.* So at length that happy change in the minds of men will be finally accomplished before his second coming, which his forerunner, John Baptist, proclaimed at his first coming by his baptism of repentance, as the Prophet Malachi has described him; *Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,* that the Jews may acknowledge the Gentiles for their CHILDREN in the faith, and the Gentiles acknowledge the Jews as their FATHERS in it, by the obstinacy on both sides being removed, by repentance of their sins and follies, through fear of God's justice, as he has threatened it by his prophet, *lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers soap, utterly to consume all the dross, and purge away the stains of all worldly and vile affections. And so it may be at this time, particularly in these kingdoms, which are now highly exalted among the nations in the fulness of temporal power and prosperity, that the minds of men were never less disposed to comply with the terms of true religion, and to abide in the purity of that doctrine and discipline which is established among us.

So great is the power of a deceitful imagination, pursuing happiness among the objects of sense, that we are easily betrayed into false conceits of our own safety and

sufficiency, when we consider ourselves as members of a state which we think is settled upon lasting foundations of worldly power and policy ; and so the men of the world, who have got some good portions in it, are fain to reason with themselves that they shall never be moved ; *their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations : they call their lands after their own names, or their own names after their lands : nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not ; no worldly honour or greatness will secure his continuance upon earth ; but in regard to his animal life, upon which the enjoyment of all such things does depend, he is like the beasts which perish, in a few years removed from the earth. This their way of reasoning is their folly ; yet their posterity, who succeed to their estates and honours, and so prove the folly of their fathers reasonings upon them, do yet approve their sayings, and follow after them in the same course. Man that is in honour of worldly account, and understandeth not from whence true honour is derived, is like the beasts that perish, in reasoning very imperfectly concerning his own condition in this life.*

There are two things very remarkable in the present circumstances of these kingdoms, which deserve our particular regard and attention : the first is what we have already observed concerning the purity of the reformed established church, which remains untainted in its doctrine and discipline, notwithstanding the incessant unwearied attempts of the enemies of truth, under various denominations, to pervert, or corrupt, or suppress the Christian faith, which we profess, as members of that church ; so that it continues unshaken by the inventions of the adversary, in all kinds of lies and impostures sent forth against it.

The other thing to be observed is concerning the temporal power of these kingdoms, which does now appear to have attained to its full growth in envied greatness ; as by comparison with our neighbours, in a long trial made through the course of a burthensome and

and tedious war, this power has increased, and is preserved superior to their efforts to destroy or break it down; and at this present time, after the conclusion of a general peace, we see ourselves possessed of these two great blessings which God's merciful providence hath preserved to us, that as sons of the established church we enjoy the pure and uncorrupted light of the gospel of Christ, which is held forth to all her children by the holy Scriptures, acknowledged by her in the full authority due to them, as containing all rules of faith and practice necessary to salvation. And again, that we enjoy also the protection of that government under which we live, and are secured in our temporal possessions by the most favourable constitutions of human policy for our domestic peace, and by the superior credit and reputation of its power are defended from all foreign hostile attempts.

After these observations are made, it will concern us to mark the consequences which may arise through a mistaken judgment of our condition, and thereby we may discern how the advantages belonging to us may be applied to promote the glory of God, and the real happiness of mankind.

If we fix our eyes and our hearts on the outward prosperity, on the wealth or strength, and the extended power and possessions of these kingdoms, we shall be deceived in this alluring prospect of them; for according to the truth of divine wisdom, *man's life*, or the happiness of it, *consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*; which is true of a nation in general, as of any particular person who lives in it; and therefore we shall make a false judgment of our condition, if we suppose our life or our happiness is insured, because we see our country in a flourishing estate: our danger may be the greater from outward temptation, and our lives on earth can be but short, how long soever the temporal welfare of these kingdoms may endure. If we would make sure of our own happiness, and desire to promote the happiness of our
brethren,

brethren, we must be instructed from the word of God to seek after those things which belong to our peace with him, and not follow the examples of such men who have no other thoughts of peace but what they can make with their own hands, to provide securities for enjoyment of their sensual purposes and pursuits; for of such men the wisdom of God has pronounced, *Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known*: although they think they understand the way of peace very well, they are nevertheless out-witted by a more crafty politician; for so it is that the god of this world would persuade them to be wise in their own conceits, and to seek only by measures of worldly wisdom and policy to bear down their neighbours, and to extend their possessions more and more by the rage of covetousness, and of insatiable ambition; such men, in the fulness of their sufficiency are in straits, always discontented and harassed by evil passions arising from their own covetous deceitful hearts.

When we understand the way of peace, we shall endeavour to employ the blessings of it to such purposes as will best serve to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of our brethren; and by the peculiar circumstances of these kingdoms we shall find there is a very large field opened for these purposes, to exercise our patience, and faithfulness, and constancy in the service of God, by endeavouring to communicate his blessings vouchsafed to us unto the rest of our brethren, that the Jews may be converted to the true faith, and that the knowledge of the true religion may be propagated to the uttermost parts of the earth, whither the power of these kingdoms is now extended.

For our encouragement in these undertakings, we find these two events, the conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith, and the propagation of it to the uttermost parts of the earth, as taking place at the same time, are connected together in the order of prophetic history; so they appear in it by the answer before mentioned,

tioned, given by our Saviour to his disciples, when they enquired of him concerning the time when he would *restore the kingdom to Israel*? he signifies this event was not to follow in the course of God's providence, until the remote parts of the earth were enlightened by the gospel; for to this purpose he tells them, *Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*, whither their successors in the ministry of the gospel would be sent forth to publish it.

The prophet Isaiah has also connected these two events, describing, in the exalted strains of sacred poesy, the wonderful and happy change which is to be made in the rude, uncultivated, uninstructed nations of the earth, when they come to learn the glad tidings of salvation from the preachers of the gospel: *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a feeble heart, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitations of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an high-way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the way-faring men, though fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there.*

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At the conclusion of this prophetic description of the gracious purpose of God to enlighten the most remote and solitary parts of the Gentile world with the knowledge of his truth, the prophet subjoins, *And the RAN-SOMED of the Lord*, the Jewish nation, which will at length acknowledge our Lord the Messiah their RE-DEEMER, *shall return and come to SION with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away.*

In consequence of this RETURN of God's people unto SION, when they come to acknowledge and obey our Lord the Messiah according to the terms of his covenant of grace in the gospel of salvation, it follows, that wonderful blessings will then be derived to all other nations which are, in the true faith, descended from the nation of Israel, after it is again reconciled and taken into favour, as formerly they were, in God's account, the peculiar people, the head of all the nations of the earth. To which purpose the prophet has declared,

And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the COVERING cast over all people, and the VAIL that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up DEATH in VICTORY, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall be take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it.

These expressions comprehend some very happy alterations, which are to be made throughout the whole earth, but peculiarly to the joy of the Jewish nation, in conferring much higher honours upon them than they had ever enjoyed, and such as cannot belong to the temporal power or prosperity of an earthly prince: this great work does belong to the Lord of Hosts himself to accomplish in our Lord the Messiah; *He will destroy in this mountain the face of the COVERING cast over all people, and the VAIL that is spread over all nations: he will swallow up death in victory.* Which promise

mise does clearly imply a conquest over the spiritual enemy of mankind; by whose contrivances sin and death came into the world, with all other spiritual and temporal evils, the consequences of them.

The time when this great victory will be manifested to all nations is determined according to prophetic history, which has declared, that this feast of universal joy to all people will be at the RETURN of the ransomed of the Lord, when the Jewish people is come back to Sion from their dispersions, to acknowledge their Messiah; *and the rebuke of HIS PEOPLE shall be take away from off all the earth.*

In this prophetic declaration, a general release or freedom is promised to the understandings of men, delivered from the triumphs of the enemy, who leads them captive, according to his principle, when they walk by their outward bodily sense of sight, and are deceived in their pursuits by *the face of the COVERING cast over all people* through his artifice; but when *the VAIL that is spread over all nations* is destroyed, they will then see clearly how to consult and to pursue their happiness; the great Deliverer of his people will accomplish also for them, and for all other people of the earth, an entire victory over all their enemies; *he will swallow up death in victory*; so that instead of such victories as are gained by earthly princes, who scatter death and destruction among their enemies, the Prince of Peace will reconcile all mankind unto God, and unto one another, by destroying *the last enemy, death*; *for he will swallow up DEATH in VICTORY*, in a compleat victory over him which hath the power of death, that is, the devil.

It doth not much concern us, who are converted to the Christian faith, to know how soon or how far distant that time may be, when it will please God to make this happy change upon earth; but it very much concerns the Jewish nation to give their attention to hear the prophets describing the glorious privileges and blessings reserved in store for them, when they will
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be again taken to be the head of the nations, as they were formerly the peculiar people of God : for if they do attend to the sacred providential history, laying aside their old prejudices, with a sincere purpose to be instructed and governed by it, *then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped,* to perceive and understand clearly the great and glorious purposes of divine mercy and goodness in making them the instruments of salvation to all the nations and families of the earth.

But although we who are now alive upon the earth have little concern in looking towards those happy days, when the fashion of this world having passed away, *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ* ; yet we must beware of evil consequences that may be falsely deduced from the present fashion and circumstances of it : for we find, among other cunning arts and suggestions of the enemies of true religion, that they are fain to boast themselves of a triumph over it, as altogether ineffectual to those purposes of reforming mankind for which we are told it was sent from heaven : and because great numbers continue to walk as Infidels or Atheists, even in those parts of the earth which are enlightened with the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of the gospel, the adversaries of it are ready to scoff and make light of all the promises and threatenings which are contained in it.

It is true, that according to our own imaginations, a very dangerous offence might arise from such false reasoning as the infidels of the present age might wish to pass upon us ; but here again our attention to prophetic history will set us free from their fallacies ; for we know by it that the age of universal righteousness and peace upon earth will not begin until it may please God to bind and chain up the great adversary of mankind, or until the BEAST and the FALSE PROPHET, the enemies of the Christian church, are cast into that place of punishment which is allotted for them.

This

This instruction we have also from the words of our Lord himself in his parable of *the tares of the field*, which are suffered to grow up with the wheat *until the time of the harvest*; which he explained to his disciples to mean *the end of the world*, when Almighty God will interpose by his power to separate *the wheat from the tares*.

To the like purpose the prophecies of Isaiah are to be understood, concerning the restoration and future happiness of the Jews, bringing with them into the Christian church all other nations of the earth, to partake, by their reconciliation, in all those mighty privileges of undisturbed joy and peace, which belong to the church triumphant upon earth, as that state of it is abundantly and variously described by the evangelical prophet.

We are therefore sufficiently provided with spiritual weapons, to repel the assaults of all infidels, mockers and scoffers at divine truth; for we are warned of all their subtil policies and practices, and what success they will find in the latter days, when the general corruption is so great that very few will be found faithful witnesses to the truth.

Upon this account, as it concerns us above all things to beware of taking offence against the truth, we must not order our conversation by such measures as may seem best to agree with the general practice and manners of the world, for we have the word of divine truth delivered into our hands, and from thence only we can derive the rules of a Christian life. If we should look to follow the examples of other men, we may be deceived in our opinions of them according to outward appearance; for there may be many of the servants of God who have not much opportunity of witnessing or making any outward shew of their sincerity in his service; and many others there are of a contrary character, who would wish to have themselves accounted among God's servants, and therefore are forward to make a shew, and so to put in their claim, by some
good

good words or fair speeches, for that purpose; but if they are followed in their principles and practices, they will at length betray their admirers into the service of the enemy: therefore let us take heed only unto God's word, and so we shall avoid their false authority, and learn to *beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

Lastly, By due attention given to the providential history of mankind, we learn by what methods we may conspire with the purposes of God's mercy to promote the happiness and salvation of all our brethren; namely, by asserting and defending his truth; a task which every faithful servant of Christ is bound to labour after, so far as the opportunities and circumstances of his life do admit; but this duty, which is incumbent on every Christian, does more peculiarly belong to those who are bound, by solemn investiture and profession, to consult and attend continually to the business, and honour, and interests of their heavenly Master, to be the guardians of his true religion, and to oppose, by their words and by their actions, all the enemies of it.

The difficulties, which his ministers have to contend with, are proportionable to the importance of their task: As they are of like passions with other men, the industrious adversary of their faith will lay hold upon them by their passions, to divert them into the ways of the world, and to send them in pursuit after the riches, or honours, or pleasures of it: so that when the outward peace of the church is established in the greatest security, a crafty persecution may be raised against the faith, to take off the pastors from their charge, by the allurements of temporal prospects; to poison the influence of their examples, by making them children of this world; and so to raise up envy and malice against them, by the pride and passions of other men.

This subtil persecution of the adversary, which is sure to take place upon occasion of the temporal peace, and prosperity, and wealth of the church, has a much more dangerous tendency to corrupt the members of it,

it, than those frequent fiery trials and persecutions, in the earlier days of the Christian church, which have shed the blood of the martyrs; for it has been said, with good reason, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, since their sufferings have distinguished between the wheat and the chaff; and although the hypocritical professors of the Christian faith have been frightened from it by seeing the blood-shedding of the martyrs, it has been the seed of succeeding generations of the faithful, begotten by the constancy and perseverance of their fathers in the true faith, who have suffered death for its sake. But the cunning policies of the enemy of truth, in persecuting the church by the outward shews of its wealth, and peace, and prosperity, are very hardly discerned, and are scarcely believed; and they who are most concerned to be watchful, are very loth to suspect any danger from them; and so it may be in times of the greatest worldly tranquility, that the enemy enjoys his unsuspected triumphs with ease and security: for if the ministers of the church are like men of the world, in luxury, and covetousness, and ambition, the worldly men will undoubtedly continue to follow their examples, howsoever they may revile and despise their persons; and they will be forward to cast their scoffs and contempt upon religion itself, if they can find such occasions to blame the ministers of it; therefore the caution of the apostle is of high importance, that we should so walk, as *giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed* by the corrupt members of the church, who would be ready to excuse their own wicked lives by any evil examples they could point out among the clergy.

It is true, we are warned of the enmity of the world against the disciples of Christ and the preachers of his gospel, even although their conduct were blameless as their Master's was; so he told them, *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* And his apostle St. John to the same purpose says, *Marvel not, brethren, if the world hate you: but for this*

enmity which arises from a steady and unalterable adherence to their duty, the faithful ministers of Christ have no cause to be afraid; for their Master has promised to support and comfort them under all discouragements in his service; but if they mean to abate this enmity, by compliances with the corrupt ways and manners of the world, in making their address to the pride, and the passions, and the sensual appetites of their brethren, they will forfeit their allegiance to their heavenly Master, and be no longer intitled to his protection; and their unfaithful crafty friends of the world will assuredly expose their weakness, and ridicule their hypocrisy, and will assault them also in their worldly concerns, to gratify themselves in their own purposes and pursuits.

It deserves to be remarked, in consequence of that purity of doctrine which belongs to the reformed church of Christ, that the ministers of it are most liable to be strictly observed, and severely censured in the course of their ministry; for the rule to judge of them is in the hands both of their friends and of their enemies; and although the former will be loth to take offence, and be ready to make allowances for their infirmities and failures in the discharge of their duty, yet if they are frequent and wilful they cannot excuse them, nor silence their adversaries, who are ready to apply every word that is written against the careless shepherds, *that do feed themselves, but not the flock.*

It is in vain to repeat it to these adversaries of truth, that they conspire with the purposes of the great enemy of mankind, when they take offence at religion by the sight of an evil, suspicious, or doubtful behaviour in any person, whose duty it is more especially to assert the honour and interests of it; for although they know very well by what rule they are to be judged, yet this argument, of a bad example, is ever like to prevail with them, who have made it their choice, to walk by sight, and not by faith.

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On account of the infection which is readily communicated from a profane or unfaithful teacher of God's word, his anger is peculiarly expressed against such a person, with a high degree of resentment; *But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?* for by such men who teach the truth, and live wickedly, the honour of God, and of his true religion, is most dangerously invaded and vilified. The temporal wealth of the church is that dangerous allurement which does entice such men to put on the outside clothing of Christ's ministers, when they are no ways qualified or concerned for promoting the welfare of his flock, and therefore they undertake, consign, and transfer the cure of souls, like goods in merchandize, by worldly friendship or connections, for the greatest present value, or for large promises, or to such persons who can find the best friends or sureties, according to the present trade in worldly interests.

The great task of the diligent stewards and watchful pastors of the flock of Christ, is to unite the instruction of a religious example with the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of his gospel, faithfully divided and distributed to their hearers; and as the difficulty of attaining this excellency in his service is very great, and engages all those who seek after it in continual warfare, attending upon this very thing, their endeavours, if they can be accounted sincere, should always meet with very favourable allowances from their Christian brethren; but as it is of the utmost importance to quicken their endeavours, the Apostle has given it to them in solemn charge, *Take heed unto YOURSELVES, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you OVERSEERS, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

The food which these faithful overseers have to distribute to the flock is ready provided for them; their business consists in *rightly dividing the word of truth, as stewards of the mysteries of God*, being instructed by his

word in that hidden wisdom which is not of this world : and when their duty does require them to defend the flock of Christ from the wolves which surround them, they will not borrow their weapons from the moral philosophers, or the wise men of this world ; *for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds* ; those strong-holds of which the enemy cannot be dispossessed but by them only who are led on under the banner of the great Captain of their salvation ; these soldiers and servants of Christ are enlisted under the authority of his NAME, with solemn engagement to observe and follow him as he has commanded, and to give no attention to other masters, the self-sufficient leaders in moral discipline ; but to *be ready*, armed and disciplined as the keepers of Eden, the angelic band of *cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life*, from all presumptuous and violent approaches.

To conclude. The terms by which these faithful overseers propose to engage others in the service of their heavenly Master, are not borrowed from the school-masters of moral virtue, who decoy their followers into high conceits of some natural or innate dignity they are possessed off by birthright, and thereby find it easy to persuade them into such an admiration of their rational faculties, that they are ready to believe they stand in no need of revelation, or if they do, that revelation must be so reasonable that with due application of their reason they may be able to find out all that ought to be revealed, as a very subtil reasoner of the moral tribe hath inculcated ; and such like teachers lead their scholars unto Christ only because they may think it reasonable to come to him ; unless they would rather chuse to walk altogether by the fitness of things, or search after virtue and happiness by the moral sense or taste, or to be delighted with their own self-sufficiency, in virtue being its own reward ; or to exalt themselves into a state of imaginary power of dispensing happiness to all mankind by universal benevolence ; and so to fall
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in love with any one or with every one in succession, of those numberless scribblers of moral treatises on fictitious characters of false taste, and feigned virtue, and false praise, which have contributed abundantly, among other infidel performances, to poison the minds, and to debauch the manners of those persons who think most highly of themselves in this present age.

The ministers of Christ's church, who mean to represent human nature, as it is in truth described according to the word of God, do not strive to conceal its weaknesses and infirmities, and those grievous disorders to which it is subject by natural depravity in its corrupted fallen state; they place it in such light as will discover the true cause, and the remedy also, of those miseries under which we are labouring. They shew clearly by whose artifice our first parents were betrayed, and how sin and death, with all the evil consequences of them, have come into the world; that the loss of our liberty, and of our happiness, are derived from disobedience to our Creator; that all men are born in sin, and are naturally disposed to be governed by that evil principle of life, by which the old enemy of mankind, the god of this world, does still endeavour to maintain his usurped dominion and tyranny over them, by the knowledge of good and evil by their senses; that his servants walk according to this principle, by living in their natural unregenerate state; that the works of such men, so long as they continue to walk after the flesh, are manifest, which are these; *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like practices*, to which every man will be led, who gives way to his natural inclinations to live after the flesh: and of these persons the Apostle adds, *As I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

The ministers of God's word, whom our Lord has called *the salt of the earth*, endeavour what they can to season

season their speech with salt, to put a stop to this natural corruption, to draw men off from walking by the evil principle, according to their own perverse wills, which lead them into the bondage and slavery of the devil, and to gain their attention, to hear and to embrace the word of God, that they may walk by faith in it, and not by sight, in false views and pursuits after happiness by their own imaginations. They labour to persuade them to *put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind*; to be regenerate, or born again unto a new life, by taking the principle of a pure and spiritual life, in giving themselves to be led by the holy spirit of God through the word of his truth.

When this blessed change is accomplished, the ministers of God are forward to congratulate their happiness, and to *rejoice with them that do rejoice*, in a recovery from a sinful course; they encourage them to grow in grace, and to *hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering*, by their trust in the merits of our holy Redeemer.

These faithful shepherds do not strive to raise the appetites, or to entertain the imaginations, or to engage the passions of Christ's flock, by any alluring promises of worldly advantages arising from his service: in this respect they can go no further than as our Lord has commanded, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, with this promise, *and all these things shall be added unto you*. Which implies, at least, that his faithful servants will find no want to complain of, howsoever their condition may be in this world, and that *godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*: for as a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth, so it is that a godly man hath a promise of a peaceful contented mind, although he may have little or no wealth, in comparison with the favourites of the world.

The ambassadors of the new covenant of grace, which is established on better promises than the old one, which was confirmed by earthly or temporal promises, are only warranted to say, on behalf of their master's service, that, according to the general course of affairs in this evil world, his servants will escape through it in a better way than if they followed the course of worldly men; for although they have no hopes given them, that if they stand fast in their allegiance to him, it will procure to them either riches, or honours, because such gifts may often encumber and endanger the spiritual welfare of his faithful followers; yet thus much they are assured of, that, generally speaking, they have the fairest prospect of getting through unhurt by the briars and thorns, which are thick set in this world: to which purpose the Apostle appeals to our own experience, to confess to the probability of this observation, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* It is not likely that even the worst men will do it; for *the fruit of the spirit*, by which a religious man is guided, *is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.* So that men of the world, who are full of the Law of Nature, and forward in persecuting one another, by the mercenaries that support the corrupt practice of it, do not readily find an occasion against good men, to bring them into trouble by the law; and in behalf of such innocent men, who chiefly attend to their duty unto God, the Psalmist has also promised in his name, *Thou shalt bide them in the secret of thy presence, from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion, from the STRIFE of TONGUES.*

But let affairs go as they will in this present world, in which many faithful servants of Christ have fared ill, as he did, in whom the enemy had nothing of worldly gifts or comforts to deprive him of, and therefore could only rob him and them of their lives, laid down for the sake of the truth; yet in these the severest trials,
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God's merciful support made them more than conquerors, to despise and to defy the rage of their enemies.

Upon these accounts the ministers of God's word have no need to work upon the passions, or to engage the attention and affections of their hearers, by flattering addresses; but they mean to keep out of their sight, as far as may be, all those deceitful pomps, and shews, and promises of earthly joy and felicity, which we are naturally disposed to lay hold upon as a reward of that pompous virtue, in which the false advocates of religion would instruct us, by inculcating the observance of the law of our corrupted nature. This law we are taught to reject by divine authority, after full trial had been made of the unprofitableness of it under the Jewish dispensation; and therefore we beseech the Jews, and all the rest of mankind, to be reconciled unto God, by opening to their view the wonders of his mercy, in abating the rigour and severity of that law, by the covenant of grace in our Lord Jesus; *for ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly tremble and quake.)*

But ye are come unto MOUNT SION, and unto the city of the living God, the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the NEW COVENANT, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

He that hath an ear, to listen to glad tidings of some better things, than what he can meet with in this present
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The PREFATORY DISCOURSE. lxxii

sent world, let him bear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the NAME of my God, and the NAME of the city of my God, which is NEW JERUSALEM, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my NEW NAME.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

THE PARADOXICAL DISCOURSE.

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discourse.

To him that overcometh will I give to sit of the tree of

life, which is in the midst of the temple of God.

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

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fore him and the

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of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh

down out of heaven, and I will write upon

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him my new name.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in

my throne, even as I did overcome, and am now seated with

my Father on his throne.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will

be his God, and he shall be my son.

PRELIMINARY

OBSERVATIONS

CONCERNING THE

RELIGION of NATURE.

SECTION I.

2 Cor. v. 7.

"For we walk by Faith, not by Sight."

IN the foregoing Chapter St. Paul had been very particular in describing the grievous trials he and his brethren did undergo, in executing the office of their ministry as the APOSTLES of JESUS CHRIST: He sets forth their condition as void of all worldly hope or comfort to support them, under the continued and cruel opposition they met with, from the enemies of that sacred doctrine which they taught and believed. But notwithstanding all possible discouragement did happen to them from without, he assures us, they were not in danger to be overcome by the evil treatment they met with; they had still some inward strength and confidence, which enabled them to hold out against all the attempts that could be made to shake their constancy. *We are troubled* (says he) *on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed,*

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but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed. And then, after shewing how profitable the example of their sufferings might be, in discovering the excellency and power of that spiritual life, by which they were sustained under them ; he proceeds yet farther to speak with full assurance in behalf of himself and others in like circumstances, that in case they were to suffer death, and to depart altogether out of this World, they would be great gainers by this Exchange : *For we know, (says he) that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* From hence he proceeds to declare how reasonable it is, on account of their present condition, that they should earnestly desire to make this happy change, being burthened in this earthly tabernacle, oppressed with many troubles and afflictions, while they converse in it ; and therefore having good reason to wish for their departure out of it, *That mortality might be swallowed up of life : now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*—These joyful prospects of a deliverance from the troubles we now suffer, and the certainty of entering upon a happy state in consequence of them, are not to be derived from our own wisdom and endeavours ; it is God who hath wrought us into this heavenly temper of mind, and hath given us his holy Spirit as a pledge of our future inheritance. *Therefore we are always confident,*—full of good courage to meet with the severest trials, even unto death, as *knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord ;*—that is, having full conviction of the great disadvantage of being separated, while we are in these frail bodies, from the presence and joy of our Lord, *(for we walk by Faith, not by Sight)*—the whole course of our conversation upon earth being ordered with a view to that invisible state we must hereafter enter upon, and not according to present sensible appearances ; *We are confident, I say, and willing rather*

to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord: wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Such is the train of Argument which gives occasion to the Apostle for introducing the words I have taken to discourse upon, which he brings as a sufficient account of that patience and resignation the Apostles had shewn in the severe trials they underwent; and how it came to pass, that so far from setting any great value upon the things of this life, they were willing to surrender them all, and even life itself, if called upon to do so, as knowing they were detained from infinitely greater joys than any they could now receive; and of these they had perfect assurance, *for, or because (says he) we walk by Faith, not by Sight.*

Three things are plainly intimated to us by these words of the Apostle:

The First, That there are a sort of persons in the world who walk by Sight.

The Second, That there are some certain reasons, why we ought to forsake this way or manner of life, and not walk by Sight.

The Third, That to find a support under all the troubles of this life, and to have assurance of future happiness, we must walk or live by Faith.

First, It is intimated to us, that there are a sort of persons in the world, who walk by Sight.

There are three volumes in this world presented to our view, and each of them requires our attention:

The first is the Volume of the Creation, containing all the works of God which are subject to our observation.

The second is the Book of God, or the Volume of his Word, delivered in Holy Scriptures.

The third is the Volume of Human Wisdom or Learning, mixed or composed of reasonings on the other two.

The first of these, the Book of the Creation of God, demands our earliest attention; this fair volume contains great variety of entertainment for all our senses, which are necessarily employed soon after we come into the world, to give us notice of things that are about us; and as our experience increases, our attention is the more engaged and fixed upon them, and we become daily more desirous of enlarging our knowledge and acquaintance among the objects of sense. The things, which contribute to the ease and support of our bodies, are earnestly sought after, and we are forward in resting our happiness on the possession and enjoyment of them. The pains of hunger, and thirst, and cold, are so grievous, that they powerfully recommend the refreshments and conveniencies by which our natural wants are relieved and supplied; whence it does unavoidably happen, that as in our early years we feel no other wants than such as arise from the craving demands of our appetites for food and other comforts of the body, we are therefore led to esteem these things absolutely good and necessary to us, and from them to derive our ease and contentment.

Since it is certain, we have no other method of getting information of what is good and desirable for us, but by our senses; it is impossible we should ever look farther for our happiness, than to those things which supply our bodily wants, unless our attention is taken off, and directed to other objects by means of some notices or instructions, which do not arise from within ourselves: whence it must follow, that they who disbelieve, that any information or instruction has been derived to them, but what has arisen from the faculties or powers which are found to be in human nature itself, these persons, according to the genuine principles of their supposition, must always continue to *walk by Sight*, that is, to be directed in their actions by having regard only to the objects of sense.

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That there is a very large class of mankind in these circumstances, who continue to be governed in their designs with a view chiefly to sensual gratifications, we can have no doubt of from conversing in the world; and that every man in particular has been in this number, his own experience and recollection will convince him, if so be that at present he is not of it.

The love and earnest desire of those things which are grateful to our appetites, has, from our infancy, taken possession of our hearts; and by experience of ease and pleasure in complying with our passions, we come to conclude, that still greater enjoyments may be had, than any we have yet met with, and of course, that in the abundance of such things as are grateful to our senses, we may arrive to happiness in this world.

But it is not easy to determine what is meant by Happiness, when we look to attain it in our present state; our pursuit of it varies in the several stages of life, and our passions are such uncertain guides, that one gives place to another to take the lead, while each of them betrays us to vexation and disappointment: so that the best description we can give of it, either from our own experience in the pursuit, or from what we can observe in the conduct of others, may be, that Happiness is success in completing the designs which the passions, by whose influence we are guided for the present, have set us upon; and this success we always IMAGINE will produce some degree of satisfaction and contentment greater than what we do now, or have heretofore enjoyed.

From this description it appears, that although the designs of men who are in search of worldly happiness may be various, according to their circumstances in life, and the passions that bear the chief sway in their conduct; yet there is one circumstance relating to this sort of happiness, which is common to all the several votaries who look after it, That the IMAGINATION, or Fancy, must always have a principal share in representing the possession of those objects we are in

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pursuit of, as productive of that joy, satisfaction, or comfort, in which we make our happiness to consist. For example, if we are eager to become rich, and are therefore busied with designs for enlarging our fortunes, it is the work of our fancy to persuade us, that the greater our wealth is, our comforts and contentment will increase in proportion to it.

Again, If we take our aim for acquiring any station of distinguished power or trust above others; our imagination must keep us warm in the pursuit, by representing the great accessions of honour and respect we are to have; and what ease and satisfaction must arise in our minds, when the wills of other men shall submit to our direction, and their passions give way to what we command.

But whatsoever passion it may be that governs for the present, and does therefore most earnestly solicit for its gratification, it is always supported by the imagination setting forth the joy and peace that must ensue to us from complying with it, and that in satisfying its demands we are pursuing that road which leads to happiness.

What and how great this power of imagination is, every man has often experienced; but as it enters so much into all the designs we can frame for the prosperity of our lives in this world, it deserves to be particularly examined.

It has been already mentioned, that we have no other way of getting any information concerning outward objects, but by our senses, that is, by seeing, hearing, or such other impressions, as by the organs of our bodies we are fitted to receive: the Good or Evil we experience, that is, the pleasure or pain communicated to our minds by these impressions, are preserved in memory, and become the subjects of our thoughts and attention: from these sources of pleasure or pain retained in our memory, and by the imagination connected to the objects by which they were produced, all our passions are derived; and according to our various

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rious circumstances in life, we are liable to be directed by them in search of that happiness, which our fancy has proposed to our choice, as attainable in our present state.

From the habit of connecting Good and Evil to the outward sensible cause, and as necessarily depending on those objects which give us pleasure or pain by their presence, that wide field of imagination is opened, which gives employment for our passions to conduct us through the whole course of our lives: in this field those persons are found, who live or walk by sight, that is, who having the visible creation before them, conclude from their wisdom and experience in it, that their own eyes are able to direct them in their way, so that of themselves they can discover what is good or evil for them in this great volume of the works of God, and are therefore capable of finding out the road to their happiness among them.

But it is suggested by the Apostle, that there are some reasons why we ought to forsake this way, or manner of life, and not walk by Sight.

These reasons must arise either from our own experience in conversing with the objects of sense; or,

2dly, From the example and instruction of other men assisting our experience by their observations; or,

Lastly, By arguments derived from the word of God.

First we are to enquire what reasons may be had from our own experience in conversing with the objects of sense, to dissuade us from walking by Sight.

We have already observed, that in childhood we are forward in resting our happiness on the satisfaction of our appetites for food, and other bodily refreshments, and do not then feel any other uneasiness, when we are relieved from the pains of hunger, or thirst, or cold. But it is not long in this season of life, before the power of imagination does discover itself, by eagerness and impatience after objects of Sight, our eyes are fixed on such things as are pleasing to the view, with

earnest desire to get more intimate acquaintance with them, and when this is obtained, by having what we fancy put into our hands, we are continually varying in our desires after new objects that are presented to our sight, and rejecting such as we have already obtained: if we are tired of those things we have got into our power, our fancy is never cooled by disappointments, but we seek for remedy to that dislike we have taken in former amusements, by making a change in our fancy to some other toys or trifles with which we have not yet been disgusted.

In this restless power of the imagination while we are children, engaging our attention to outward objects, and making them necessary to our ease and contentment, the seeds of those passions are perceivable, which may usurp the dominion over us in the future course of our lives.

The farther we advance in years, we receive greater and more lasting impressions from objects of sense, our notions of GOOD and EVIL become fixed to the pleasures or pains which outward objects communicate to us, our love or aversion to such objects as delight or displease us, becomes more steady and determined, and the passions of riper age are less subject to change than in youth; but when we are disappointed in our expectations, and find that our happiness cannot be attained by such methods as our passions have hitherto proposed to us, the remedy is the same we have used in childhood, to seek for satisfaction by varying the object, and thereby giving our attention to some new design.

Thus it must always happen to those persons who do not live under the power of revealed Religion, that they can never be taught by their own experience, that happiness is not to be found in sensual gratifications; for they have been convinced there is great variety of pleasures to be met with in the good things of this life; and therefore it must unavoidably happen, that their own reason or common sense will dictate to them

them to pursue these things, and to treasure them up, that they may be happy in the possession of them, and that they shall still continue to admire the condition of such persons, whose power and wealth can enable them to command, what their imagination does suggest to be necessary for contentment.

So that if we are left to ourselves to be guided by the trials we can make among these temporal things for discovery of our happiness, as we have no other way to come by our knowledge of Good and Evil but by objects of sense, and the pleasures and pains arising from them, we shall of course always continue to walk by Sight.

But it may be said, there is a governing principle or power in man, too noble and refined, to seek for his happiness among the objects of sense; that if he does attend to its dictates, he will pursue such pleasures as are suitable to the dignity of his nature, far exalted above the rank of other creatures of the earth; that by this power he will be taught to extend his views beyond the concerns of this mortal state, and from discharging his duty in this world by its direction, he must conceive certain hopes of a reward in a future state; or, in other terms, that there is a NATURAL RELIGION, to which, if we give due attention, we may be sufficiently instructed, how to behave in the several relations in which we are placed, and by living according to this Religion, through the dictates of RIGHT REASON, we shall meet with approbation and recompence from the Supreme Being in a future state, and at present deserve the esteem and good-will of men.

We are TOLD there is such a Religion, and therefore it comes properly to be considered under the course of the next argument, by examining,

2. Whether we can learn from the example or instructions of other persons, independently of the word of God, that we ought not to walk or live by Sight.

It is a principle not like to be disputed, That reason ought to govern mankind; but every man who agrees

to this acknowledged truth, does it upon supposition that his own reason should be his guide in all actions that concern his private happiness; so that if we are told by others that there is a Natural Religion which reason has long since discovered, we can be under no sort of obligation to live according to this Religion, until our own reasonings have suggested to us, that our happiness will be promoted by observing the rules prescribed by it; and if our reason does agree that what we are told is Natural Religion, will lead us to be happy, it must follow of course that such Religion will be natural to mankind; that is, every man will be inclined to obey the precepts of it.

Perhaps it will not now be said, there is any such Religion as can be called natural in this respect, it being evident, that men are not naturally disposed to follow such rules as will be allowed by us to deserve the name of Religion. For if this may be taken for a general definition of Religion, that it is an awful regard manifested by our actions to the will of a superior Being, whom we believe to be capable to promote or to prevent our happiness, it will not follow that we shall be naturally inclined to regard the will of that superior Being, unless the doing his will should not oppose or contradict our own; and as reason is in this case supposed to be the only instructor, it will be hard to conceive how it can happen, that without any declaration made to us of what is pleasing unto God, we could ever discover of ourselves, that what contradicts our wills, and of course our present views and reasonings about our own happiness, can be agreeable to him.

From hence it must unavoidably follow, that if mankind were left to their own reason in religious matters, they would have a Religion, which they would suppose to be agreeable to the Gods, as being consistent with their designs for happiness in this world, and so would conspire with doing according to their own wills in the most perfect enjoyment of all the pleasures of this life.

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In considering what the articles of this Religion would be, there is one great difficulty in the way, that it is hard for us to conceive, how gross the ignorance was of those who have sate in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and therefore they who among us have turned their thoughts to the discovery of Natural Religion, have gone far beyond the mark, and have brought out a Religion by the light of God's word, instead of one, as they pretend, from the light of natural reason: and this religious error will surely meet with many profelytes, fond of self-sufficiency, and ready to suppose that human reason is capable to direct our way in all concerns relating to our happiness.

But however we may be disposed to entertain high conceits of innate abilities, it is certain that it would arise from the fears, and wants, and weaknesses of human nature; that we must be inclined to look out for support, and to search for a superior Being to shelter ourselves from injuries under his protection. We know by experience that we are not able to preserve our bodies in health, or to secure the enjoyment of those good things from whence our ease and comforts in this world are derived; and therefore it would be natural for us to look with attention and regard towards those external objects, whose power did appear to be employed in doing us good, or preserving us from evil. We see that the fruitfulness of the earth, the purity of the air, and the clemency of the seasons, are necessary to our well-being in this life; and as we could not command these advantages for our service, it would reasonably come into our thoughts to make application to some superior Beings, by whose influence we might conceive the elements would prove favourable to us: and in these, or in the visible regions of the heavens, the unassisted light of reason would lead mankind to conceive those deities did reside, who were most immediately concerned in the government of human affairs; and as the elements are apparently separated and distinguished, and are often seen acting in opposition
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to each other with seeming violence; this opposition would lead us to conclude each element had its distinct or peculiar deities to whom it was subject: and this we know in fact has been the opinion of heathen nations in the world.

From such like principles as these, derived by our observations of outward sensible objects, human reason, unassisted, might build up a system of Natural Religion; but if any man will dispute concerning these or such like articles of it, he may be at liberty to do it, observing only the proper boundary, that he intrude not into things he hath not seen, for such things only as he hath SEEN, he is warranted by his reason to argue upon.

With regard to a state of happiness or misery after leaving this world, if an individual or single person is considered, it does not appear how his reason could inform him of any such state; but if men are united as members of society, we may be able to trace out the fountain, whence the hopes or fears of mankind respecting another life, may, by their reasonings, be derived.

It is allowed that men are sociable creatures, naturally desirous to enter into friendship and alliance with each other; but as every man must still continue to aim after his own happiness, general rules must be framed for our direction how this end must be obtained, to prevent our designs from interfering to the prejudice of others; so that no society could subsist for establishing peace, good order, and security in private possessions, without laws, enjoined by public authority, prescribing our manner of behaviour, and enforcing obedience with due sanctions of rewards and punishments.

Experience however must soon discover how unable mere human authority would prove to accomplish the beneficial ends of society, and how difficult it would be to hinder many offences from escaping the censure of the laws; but especially how hardly the truth should be made known in all cases for the conviction of offenders.

ders: therefore before men can properly be reckoned sociable creatures, that is, fit and disposed for answering the ends of society, they ought to be prepared with due awe and reverence to regard the authority and inspection of a Judge, whose knowledge and power is superior to the power and authority of man.

This never did escape the observation of those law-givers who best understood the happiness of mankind united in society; and as it was natural for men to conceive their actions were subject to the observation of superior Beings, as judges of their behaviour, it became easy upon this foundation to propagate the belief of a future state: for the strongest argument discoverable by reason for supporting us in this belief, does proceed from the supposition of our being made or designed for society, in which we find by experience, they who deserve the best treatment from their fellow-citizens or countrymen, are oftentimes very ill rewarded for their sincere endeavours to promote the general welfare, and therefore a well-grounded hope may be supposed to arise in the breasts of such men, that hereafter by the justice of the Divine Being, they would find a recompence for their virtues in another life.

As to the happiness of that state, so far as reason could lead us in the discovery, it must be estimated by resemblance to such pleasures as would give us, in this life, the most sincere and lasting entertainment; and might, by the most refined understandings, be supposed to consist in the exercise of exalted virtues, of love, and friendship, and contemplation, as being the most delightful employment of their lives in this world.

If any man will say, that from the presages of his own mind, or by considering the nature of the soul, he can discover its immortality, and the certainty of a future state, he may enjoy what he himself feels, or what by his own reasonings he is persuaded of; but if he does attempt by arguments from the light of reason to convince others of these most important truths, all he can say for this purpose must be derived from such like
obser-

observations as we have already mentioned, that is, our hope of future happiness, or dread of misery, would arise from consciousness of a due discharge, or criminal neglect, of our duty in social relations : so that all the articles of that religion we would naturally be disposed to profess, by the light of Reason, may be finally resolved into conclusions we would make from conversing with sensible objects, or in walking by Sight.

To make such conclusions, is all that human reason, unassisted by the word of God, could be able to perform in the discovery of Religion ; and those men who in the dark ages of the world have enforced the obligations to morality through the prospect of a future recompence, were the great friends and benefactors of mankind.

But although in the heathen world a man might justly entertain comfortable hopes of his future state, who had lived in such manner as to have his behaviour applauded for his discharge of moral or social duties, by having contributed what he could for promoting the prosperity of his fellow-citizens, his countrymen, or his friends ; yet the case is widely different in these times, which are blessed with clear revelation of the will of God, and a certain discovery of the terms of eternal happiness ; for we cannot in our days have recourse to our own Reason to point out the means of our salvation, without contradicting the word of God, by which we are taught to walk by Faith ; whereas our Reason, if left to itself, will always direct us to walk by Sight and not by Faith.

What has hitherto been observed with regard to the steps which our Reason would propose for conducting us to our present and future happiness, is intended to point out and ascertain the limits to which it must necessarily be confined, and to shew that its province can extend no farther than to discover what is best for us in this world ; having this foundation laid down for it to work upon, That the pleasures and pains which we receive from outward objects by our senses,

are the GOOD and EVIL of our lives : upon this PRINCIPLE the whole volume of mere human wisdom or reasoning is composed, so far as it regards our morals in private character, or our public behaviour as members of society.

As that province which belongs to Reason is confined within narrow limits, it has been ambitious very much to exceed its natural boundary, and to lay claim to discoveries no ways appertaining to it ; so that the volume of human reasoning regarding our moral behaviour does at present consist not only of observations made by our own experience in conversing among objects of sense, but of conclusions drawn from principles not discoverable by human Reason, but assumed as such, though taken from holy writ.

Many instances of this sort might be given, but the following general notices or articles, as an eminent deistical author has called them, who asserts they are known and were found out by Reason, may afford a sufficient example of its usurping unwarrantable privileges.

1. That there is one Supreme God.
2. That he is chiefly to be worshipped.
3. That piety and virtue is the principal part of his worship.
4. That we must repent of our sins, and if we do so, God will pardon them.
5. That there are rewards for good men, and punishments for bad men in a future state.

If any person, who is reputed a reasonable man, would say, that these articles never were discovered by Reason, and affirm it confidently, as well he might, without going any farther ; he has produced as good an argument to shew that they are falsely alledged to be found out by human reason, as any writer of the deistical class has yet done to prove the contrary : for if there be no certain rule or infallible judge to decide what principles we ought to embrace, it is not easy to prove, why one man's reason ought to submit to another's.

ther's, in such matters as stand clear of any compact, or where private happiness is only concerned.

This consequence is so clearly apprehended, that the abovementioned rank of authors have, as it was needful, taken good care to gain favour with every man they meet, by founding out abundant praises of the self-sufficiency of our Reason, and the high dignity and excellence of human nature, that by these means they may secure their party from desertion; and likewise by doing honour to their understandings, procure a ready consent for embracing such principles as their own property, which have been surreptitiously taken from divine revelation: So that the freedom of their thinking consists in appropriating to themselves, as the fruit of their own knowledge and innate abilities, some truths from holy Scripture, reserving full liberty to argue upon them, according to the taste or instincts, or appetites of human nature, which, by their supposition, is perfect.

In regard to the aforementioned articles, it is clear, from our knowledge of the history of mankind, that in the ages preceding the Gospel Revelation, all the nations of the world, excepting the Jewish people, did worship a plurality of gods; that they did not think piety and virtue were the principal part of their worship, that they knew nothing of the duty of Repentance, as it is now understood, and were very uncertain in their opinions about a future state, or what might be hoped for or dreaded in it; and therefore we who are of the Gentile world can give no other account of our departure from the errors and superstitions of Heathenism, but that our Reason has been improved by learning the doctrines of Christianity, whence, and not from the light of Reason unassisted, those articles are drawn.

This general answer might be sufficient to baffle the most elaborate attempts that have been made by deistical writers, to establish in the latter days a Natural Religion, independent of Divine Revelation; but few of these men have escaped through their own times, without

without meeting distinct and particular replies, such as had been sufficient to procure a recantation, had they not laboured under a want of ingenuity, the distemper which is seldom observed to forsake those men, who have once engaged to oppose or to pervert the word of God.

But it may be we are not so much in danger of losing our Religion, by men who do openly and avowedly oppose it, as by another sort of adversaries to the truth, a generation of men who are not content to build upon the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; but they must needs have their own hands employed in laying the foundation again; so that altho' St. Paul tells us, (1 Cor. iii. 11.) *Other foundation can no man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ*, yet it seems this is not sufficient in the opinion of these men to support the building of our holy Religion, against the assaults and attempts of its enemies; and upon this supposition it is, that these professed Christians, setting aside the authority of the Prophets and Apostles, have undertaken, by the strength of their own hands, to combat with the adversaries; engaging by the force of their own reason to make a sure foundation, and to defend our Religion erected thereupon, from all attacks that can be made to shake or overturn it.

But it should be examined, whether they are not over-heated in imagination of their own sufficiency, and whether the enemy of all true religion has not some share to boast of in rearing up this edifice, which such undertakers would have to be esteemed as the Christian Church.

That execution of this design which I have principally in view, is contained in a treatise intitled "A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God," which is preparatory to "A discourse concerning the unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation,"

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by the late Dr. Samuel Clarke, rector of St. James's, Westminster.

In a short preface to the *Demonstrations*, &c. the Author has occasion to express himself to this purpose, that he "thinks it not the best way for any one to recommend his own performance, by endeavouring to discover the imperfections of others, who are engaged in the same design with himself of promoting the interest of true religion and virtue."

He who writes or argues to gain applause upon his management of any religious subject, may be very deservedly disappointed in recommending his own performance, by discovering the imperfections of others; since of all sorts of ambition, the desire of leading a party, and dictating in matters of religion, is the most dangerous in its consequences, and ought to be most strictly observed and discouraged, wherever this design of false glory appears.

But there is a supposition in the above-quoted expression of the Author, implying, that it may not be adviseable to discover the imperfections of others engaged in the same design with himself of promoting the interest of true religion and virtue, because these imperfections, or imperfect arguments, or inconclusive reasonings (for so much the expression in its place must signify) may be, notwithstanding, of some use in carrying on or promoting that interest; so that he may be suspected of not wishing well to the cause of true religion and virtue, who would endeavour to expose the weakness of an unsound argument produced and alledged for their service.

In this respect I must beg leave to differ from him, because the only method by which we can be assured of any truth, which is not self-evident, is by considering the ways or means which have introduced it to our understandings, and observing the connexion between it and such principles, as we have taken for certain or self-evident: so that if I am told, that by a course or train of reasoning which is laid before me any proposition

sition of SCIENCE is demonstrated, I may for the present acquiesce and receive it upon that authority; but if I should be able to enquire into this train of argument, and find that it is not conclusive, I may reject the truth, because it does not come properly introduced or recommended by such arguments as are intitled to require my assent, and thereby I may conceive a prejudice against it: and as prejudices against true Religion are too easily received, any design of supporting it by reasonings which are not conclusive, must always endanger it to be forsaken by its friends, and to be betrayed to its enemies; for the adversary of it being well acquainted with his own wares, if any falshood or lye is blended with the truth, it will not be hid from his discernment, and he is well enough skilled to make use of his own engine, to overturn and supplant the truth.

Besides, it is highly injurious to true Religion, which is peculiarly the truth of God, to suppose, that it can stand in need of specious or presumptive arguments for its defence, and of consequence it must be always allowable to discover and reject them, that true Religion may be settled upon its own foundation (the word of God) on which alone it can and will for ever rest secure.

It was necessary to observe so much on the above cited words of Dr. Clarke, as a proper introduction to remarks on his treatise, which has been regarded as a work of great merit in supporting the interests of true religion and virtue, and therefore the design of shewing its insufficiency, might be received with much prejudice and disapprobation.

This treatise has not escaped the censure of learned and discerning men, who have been well aware of its nature and tendency, and what advantages it might afford to the cause of infidelity, which accordingly have been laid hold on by some of the ablest advocates against Revelation.

The Author of that learned Treatise, intituled, "The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not

"from Reason or Nature," has asserted, "God not to be demonstrated, therefore not discoverable by Reason."—And what he says to this purpose does in substance contain enough to overthrow the reasonings of Dr. Clarke in his *Demonstrations of the Being, &c.* which depend on false suppositions; and so soon as they are removed, his chain of argument must of course be dissolved; for it is false to suppose that any proposition can be demonstrated, the truth of which cannot be proved to the senses, because the clearness and certainty of that knowledge which arises from demonstration, proceeds from a two-fold evidence, by the testimony of the senses confirming what is approved to be true by the understanding; consequently, if the truth asserted cannot be the object of the senses, the proposition containing that truth cannot be mathematically demonstrated. For example, it is demonstrated, that the square of one side of a certain triangle is equal to the squares of the other two sides; this truth is proved to the understanding by a clear process of reasoning, built on self-evident principles; and what is asserted, is proved also to sense or sight; because if the area of one square is measured, it will be found equal to the areas of the other two; that is, there will be found so many square feet or inches in it, as in both the other squares taken together.

This two-fold evidence belongs to every proposition, which, strictly speaking, is demonstrated; so that the demonstrations exhibited in the several branches of mathematical learning, are capable of standing the test or examination both of the understanding and of the senses; the truth of every theorem, both in the synthetic and analytic method of demonstration, being received under this condition, that what the understanding, by due process of argument, discovers to be true, is also capable of being shewed to be true to sense or sight, as appears in the former method by geometrical construction, and in the latter by numerical or literal notation, representing visible quantities.

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In regard to those branches of mathematical reasoning which relate to infinites, this two-fold evidence is not found ; and therefore, although by reasoning it has been concluded that matter is infinitely divisible, this assertion is not so clear, and so readily embraced, as the truth of the foregoing Proposition, or of such others as our senses conspire to ascertain ; and particularly in regard to the universal arithmetic of infinites, or the method of fluxions, disputes have arisen among the mathematicians, whether such method was scientific.

Again, A proposition is then demonstrated, when it would be absurd to deny what it affirms ; that is, if we refuse to assent to the truth contained in it, we must be forced to deny some axiom, or self-evident principle, upon which the demonstration is built ; but all the axioms, or self-evident principles of the mathematicians, are obtained by the testimony of the senses ; as, That the whole is greater than a part of any quantity : that if to equal things, equal things be added, they will continue to be equal : that a right line is the shortest between any two points ; and the like, which no man is supposed to be capable of disputing, because he is assured of the truth of such like propositions, by the immediate information of his senses, and to dispute the reality of such information, is allowed to be absurd, or contrary to reason : whence it follows, that this power of evidence, derived from the testimony of our senses, is relied upon to establish the truth against all opposition.

But this evidence, derived from the senses, which establishes mathematical truth, cannot be had in the proof of propositions that do not relate to sensible or visible objects ; consequently it is an unwarrantable abuse of the term, to say that such propositions are or can be demonstrated.

It has been said by Mr. Locke, “ That he might
“ be bold to affirm, that morality was capable of de-
“ monstration, altho’ it has been generally taken for
“ granted, that mathematics alone are capable of de-
“ monstrative certainty ; but (as he argues) to have
“ such

“ such an agreement or disagreement as may intuitively be perceived, being, as I IMAGINE, not the privilege of the ideas of number, extension, and figure alone ; it may possibly be the want of due merit and application in us, and not of sufficient evidence in things, that demonstration has been thought to have so little to do in other parts of knowledge, and been scarce so much as aimed at by any but mathematicians ; for whatever ideas we have, wherein the mind can perceive the agreement or disagreement that is between them, there the mind is capable of intuitive knowledge ; and where it can perceive the agreement or disagreement of any two ideas by an intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement they have with any intermediate ideas, there the mind is capable of demonstration, which is not limited to ideas of extension, figure, number, and their modes.”

In this argument his premisses do not at all infer his conclusion, “ That demonstration is not limited to ideas of extension, figure, number, and their modes, that is, to propositions relating to sensible and visible objects ;” for although a man, whose mind is contemplating his own ideas of moral actions, may have an intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement of them, which may afford a full and perfect assurance to himself of the truth of certain propositions which he may form concerning them ; yet it does not follow, that because he has an intuitive knowledge of his own ideas, that therefore he is able by definitions to raise such ideas in my mind, or to make me perceive their agreement or disagreement precisely, as it appears to him ; for so much is implied when he tells me such a proposition is demonstrated by him.

“ A demonstration given, or noted down in a book, is, properly speaking, a relative term for an appeal to the reason of mankind, signifying the establishment of a certain truth by a process of argument, rising from self-evident principles, exhibited by the
 “ testimony

“ testimony of our senses ; which truth, if denied,
 “ will imply a disbelief of the reality of any informa-
 “ tion from our senses ; that is, the denial of it will
 “ be an absurdity or contradiction to our reason, which
 “ has all its subjects, or materials of argument, from
 “ sight or sense.”

If any man will try to form a demonstration of any moral truth, he will find, that he must rest the evidence of it upon the external act being expressive of the internal act of the mind ; hereby, as in mathematical reasonings, introducing the senses to give testimony to the truth : For example, if he attempts to demonstrate that murder is a sin, the evidence must fall upon the outward act of depriving a man of his life : but reduce this to a proposition which is purely the object of the understanding, by laying aside the outward act, “ *Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer,*” — and for this proposition of religious truth, a demonstration cannot be had ; yet in it lies that circumstance, which is of greatest weight in proving that murder is a sin ; for the judgment of God upon our behaviour in moral actions, depends upon the intentions of our minds ; so that if morality could be demonstrated, it is only with reference to the judgment of men ; and therefore such demonstrations would not be useful for the establishment of true religion, which regards the judgment of God.

As it may appear from these considerations, that the term of demonstration, or any comparison from mathematical reasoning, is improperly introduced or applied to the proof of propositions, whose truth cannot be represented by any external or visible objects ; it remains to be enquired what Dr. Clarke has performed in his work, which he has intitled, “ *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.*”

He professes his design in this undertaking to be chiefly for confutation of Atheists ; so that before he lays down his first proposition, he premises, “ That
 “ because the persons he is at present dealing with,
 “ must

“ must be supposed not to believe any Revelation,
 “ nor acknowledge any authority they will submit to,
 “ but only the bare force of reasoning ; I shall not, at
 “ this time, draw any testimony from Scripture, nor
 “ make use of any sort of authority, nor lay any stress
 “ upon any popular arguments in the matter before
 “ us, but confine myself to the rules of strict and de-
 “ monstrative argumentation.”

If he has indeed stood to these conditions, it is wonderful, that his reason alone should be able to produce something, which the reasonings of all mankind were not able to afford until his days : But on examination it may be found, that these terms were too hard for him to observe ; so that he has borrowed from an authority which he disavows, and the demonstration is not so entirely his own as he represents it.

According to the analytical method of demonstrative reasoning, his work must begin from certain data or terms granted to him by those persons whom he means to confute, by the conclusion he draws out from what they are willing to give him without any dispute. For this purpose he has fixed upon a proposition, which, he says, is so evident and undeniable, that no Atheist in any age has ever presumed to assert the contrary, which is, “ That SOMETHING has existed from “ all eternity.”

By the rules of mathematical argumentation, this proposition is to be taken as an axiom, or self-evident truth, which may be undeniably proved to our senses ; for otherwise the Atheists, his fictitious or imaginary opponents, will not allow it, since they are assuredly of the same sect of the *Sadducees*, *who say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit* — distinct or separated from material or visible forms ; and therefore to join issue, and to lead them into his demonstrations, Dr. Clarke's proposition must be taken to imply, that this material visible world, or some visible thing in it or about it, is eternal. If he denies that his Something is to be understood of any thing which is visible or material,

material, he precludes the possibility of arguing demonstratively, or of arguing at all by demonstration to convince his supposed Atheists; so that the amusing fallacy of his demonstrative art lies in the terms (something) brought into his proposition, instead of some one certain or visible thing, and affirmed to be eternal, by which means eternity, an essential attribute, is indefinitely applied to something, in a blasphemous abuse of reasoning and of speech.

If this proposition, that "Something has existed from all eternity," is proposed to believers, they will not agree to it, but reject it as false, when taken to signify any thing but that God has existed in eternity, in which sense it will in no sort answer the purposes of Dr. Clarke's elaborate Mathematical Analysis; so that his axiom will not be granted as he would have it, either by Atheists or believers, which precludes his argument from taking place either with one or the other of them; and thus his ambitious ladder, having no foot or foundation to stand upon, does of course fall to the ground.

As we know the truth by other means than from our own reasonings concerning it, we are now able to point out where they must fail in conducting us to it.

The visible or material world, containing all things of whose existence we have knowledge by our senses, is that great object upon which our thoughts must be employed, if we were to search for discovering the FIRST CAUSE, without any information of revealed truth. Hence we may observe the insuperable difficulty that would lie in our way towards this discovery; for before we could attain to the knowledge of the CREATOR, we must be able to prove, that none of the objects of our senses could have existed from all eternity: so that Dr. Clarke, instead of taking the affirmative proposition as granted to him, that Something has existed from all eternity, if he will abide by pure reasoning, he must change it into a negative proposition, and prove it, that Something (which may include

include indefinitely any and every object of our senses) has not existed from all eternity.

Further, the knowledge we have by our senses of the existence of material or visible objects is most clear and certain; and if no revelation had ever reached our minds concerning the FIRST CAUSE, it would be natural and necessary for mankind to search after it among those beings which are the objects of our senses, and so to conceive of it, as residing in or among the elementary or heavenly bodies, of whose existence we have full and clear conviction. And hence another insuperable difficulty will arise to him who would find out, or, as it is said, demonstrate the Being of God by his own reasonings; for in regard to him of whom he would desire to have the most certain knowledge, he must not seek for him among those things which he most evidently knows do exist; but he must contradict this evidence, as unfit to lead him to the true God: so that another negative proposition lies in his way to prove, that God cannot be the object of his senses.

How unable mankind have been of themselves, to renounce or give up this evidence of their senses in search after the true God, appears from the representations made of their deities or false gods, in the universal attachment of the heathen world to idolatrous, that is, to visible objects of worship.

But the greatest of all difficulties does yet remain to be got over; for it appears by the clear discovery of Divine Revelation, that there is no proportion or similitude between the objects of our senses, the things which are seen, and the things which are not seen: so that if we attempt to reason from the knowledge of earthly things, to arrive at the knowledge of heavenly things, we have no foundation of proportion or analogy to conduct us from earth to heaven; that is, we are of ourselves utterly destitute of any principle or foundation, on which we may rely to guide us, either to the knowledge of the true God, or of his will con-

cerning our obedience to him. And as mankind, without the light of revelation, must argue by ANALOGY, that is, by REASON, from hence they will most certainly argue amiss with regard to divine things, and their conclusions about them will be false and erroneous.

From this source of arguing by analogy, the multitudes of heathen divinities arose; so that the belief of the gentile world in a plurality of gods, was an error of the natural growth of our own reasoning, and deeply rooted in the human mind: for as we conceive of other men, that their wills are free, and that, according to the powers they appear to be possessed of, they may be influenced by our behaviour to become either serviceable or hurtful to us, this train of reasoning, continued, will lead us to believe, there may be other beings in the regions of the air, or residing in the heavens or in the earth, superior to men; and that in like manner their wills are free and untroubled to do us good or evil, according as we behave in our addresses towards them. The observations we make upon one another, in regard to our own freedom of will, and power of acting according to it, lays such a strong foundation for our reasoning by analogy from ourselves to those supposed heavenly deities, that the wisest heathens, who were best instructed by traditional revelation, concerning the true God, could not get over this difficulty, unsurmountable to mere human reason; so that we find them alternately speaking, sometimes of God, and again of the Gods, and at other times of a Supreme God, as the father of Gods and men.

Again, if we argue analogically to discover from our own reasonings what the will of God is with regard to our behaviour to one another, the most perfect system of morality we could frame, would be such as would best conduce to our mutual happiness in this world, making the prosperity and ease and comforts of this life, the foundation of those social duties we would

would think ourselves obliged to perform to each other. But this we know is not according to the truth of revealed religion, which does not set forth the happiness of this state as the main object of our attention in those duties we owe to our brethren, in obedience to the will of God : for the rule given by Christ to his Disciples is, that they should love one another as he had loved them ; and we know that he taught them by his example and instructions, to be humble, and meek, and patient, and not to look for their happiness in this present world. Here is *a new commandment*,—with a new scene of morality opened, pointing out, that our love to others must begin in ourselves, by our example instructing them to be followers of him who was meek and lowly in heart ; and, in consequence of attending chiefly to the interest of a future state, to set little value on the enjoyments and temporary distinctions of this life.

But to return to Dr. Clarke's proposition, that " SOMETHING has existed from all eternity, — this (he says) is so evident and undeniable a proposition, that no Atheist in any age has presumed to assert the contrary ;" —but howsoever, he does not think fit to leave it to itself, without some reasoning to support it ; and therefore he argues, " For since Something now is, it is manifest Something always was." The word (Something) in these two propositions must be of different signification ; otherwise it agrees to what the Atheist asserts : for since Something now is, it is manifest Something always was, is an atheistical proposition, applicable to the visible material world. If the word (Something) in the foregoing propositions signifies two different Somethings, he takes that for granted which he endeavours to prove, and his argument is to this effect : Since Something now is, to wit, the visible material world, or any part or parcel of it, " it is manifest that Something always was," —different or distinct from this visible material frame of the world ; which is the point in question between him and his adversary ;

adversary, and the reason he gives infers it again: "Otherways the things that now are must have risen out of nothing absolutely and without cause;" that is, he takes for granted that the things which now are, must have RISEN at some determinate period; which is over again the point in debate. He goes on, "for to say a thing is produced, and yet there is no cause at all of that production, is to say something is effected, when it is effected by nothing, that is, at the same time when it is not effected at all." But who ever said so? The Atheist does not say, that the material world, or his Something, was produced; here again therefore he takes for granted what he disputes about.

Such is the depth of his reasoning, which recoils back, and returns upon itself, and proves nothing out of that Something with which it set out; for if his proposition be taken to signify any other truth, but that, God is, it cannot be allowed him, as I have already observed; yet in this sense he cannot be satisfied with it, as it will not answer the purpose of producing his subsequent propositions, which he would not have to be identical, or affirming the very same truth in different terms.

He proceeds, "Whatever exists has a CAUSE of its existence, either in the NECESSITY of its own nature, and then it MUST BE eternal, or in the will of SOME OTHER Being, and then that other Being must AT LEAST in the order of nature and CAUSALITY have existed before it."

Here is a most important proposition, in impious, or rather blasphemous disguise, confounding the Creator with his creature, yet distinguishing between them, though asserting each has a CAUSE of its existence, by a forgery of his invention, of NECESSITY of its own nature for a CAUSE of the Supreme Being, differing from the creature as having its cause in the will of SOME other Being, and then that OTHER BEING (as he styles him) must AT LEAST in the order of nature and causality have existed before it.

Such

Such is the impious language of self-sufficiency and presumption, in setting aside the authority of divine revelation, to lean to our own understandings, when we attempt to prove, as from our own stock of wisdom, that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

From this illustration of his proposition in such terms as do very well express his own confidence, he draws his conclusion as being firmly established by it, "That
" Something therefore has really existed from eternity
" is one of the certainest and most evident truths in
" the world, acknowledged by all, and disputed by
" none."

It is to be feared his word for Something has been taken by too many persons without dispute: but howsoever he does not slip this one of the certainest and most evident truths in the world, without raising some difficulty about it; for although it be a most evident truth, " Yet as to the manner how it CAN BE,
" there is nothing in nature more difficult for the
" mind of man to conceive than this very first plain
" and self-evident truth. For how ANY THING can
" have existed eternally, that is, how an eternal duration can be now ACTUALLY PAST, is a THING utterly
" as impossible for our narrow understandings to comprehend, as any thing that is not an express contradiction can be imagined to be."

He has not told us clearly for what reason he should start a difficulty against most evident truth, and therefore we are at liberty to conjecture about it; and it is sure there can be no good cause to raise doubts or difficulties about evident propositions of sacred truth; doubting against evidence, being the dreadful distemper of a mind departing from life, and betraying itself into the paths of death.

To enquire into the manner how a self-evident truth can BE, implies that we must be doubtful of it, that is, it implies that it is not self-evident, and so his reasoning returns upon itself.

The

The question producing this difficulty, is indeed a most strange one, "How ANY THING can have existed eternally? that is, How an eternal duration can be now actually past?" or at an end, let it be considered, whether this is not a "real and express contradiction." But if our minds are led into enquiries, utterly impossible for our narrow understandings to comprehend, this is a method or MANNER to baffle our understandings, and to rack and torture them into an acquiescence consenting unto lies.

His next paragraph sets forth the use of his difficult question, and this may lead us into something likely to be his sort of reason for producing it. For thus he proceeds.

"The use I would make of this observation is this; that since all questions concerning the nature and perfections of God, or concerning any thing to which the idea of eternity or infinity is joined; though we can indeed demonstrate certain propositions to be true, yet it is impossible for us to comprehend or frame any adequate or compleat ideas of the manner how the things so demonstrated can BE: therefore when once any proposition is clearly demonstrated to be true, it ought not to disturb us, that there be perhaps perplexing objections on the other side, which for want of adequate ideas of the manner of the existence of the things demonstrated, are not easy to be cleared."

His meaning is so completely obscured in the subtle incoherent, and disingenuous terms of his art, that they unavoidably have their effect, in distressing the mind of any man who would labour to unfold it; and perhaps he has been the most successful of all men that ever lived, in raising difficulties and doubts about true Religion, while he professes himself the undoubted champion of it.

But to take hold, if it may be, of what he says, let us again repeat his words.

"That

“ That since all QUESTIONS concerning the NATURE
 “ and PERFECTIONS of GOD, or concerning ANY
 “ thing to which the idea of ETERNITY or INFINITY is
 “ joined; though we can INDEED DEMONSTRATE
 “ CERTAIN propositions to be true, yet it is impossi-
 “ ble for us to comprehend or FRAME any adequate or
 “ complete ideas of the MANNER HOW the THINGS so
 “ demonstrated can BE”—(TRUE, must be added, as no
 other word is of any consequence to the questions.)
 “ Therefore when once any proposition is clearly de-
 “ monstrated to be TRUE, it ought not to disturb us,
 “ that there be PERHAPS perplexing objections on the
 “ other side, which for want of adequate ideas of the
 “ MANNER of the EXISTENCE of the THINGS demon-
 “ strated are not easy to be cleared,” although clearly
 demonstrated.

If this specimen of his reasoning does not shew SOME-
 THING of his meaning, I am not able more clearly to
 prove it. But there is more to the same purpose yet
 to follow.

“ INDEED, were it possible there should be any pro-
 “ position which could equally be demonstrated on both
 “ sides of the QUESTION, or which could on both sides
 “ be reduced to imply a contradiction (as SOME have
 “ too inconsiderately asserted.)” Moderately enough
 expressed indeed, “ this it MUST BE CONFESSED would
 “ alter the CASE.”

Here is a new labyrinth of error opened, which he
 gives us a view of, and then makes a feint to shut it
 up again; but who knows how many of us may be
 “ too inconsiderately,” led on towards it, and entering
 in “ upon this absurd supposition, all difference of true
 “ and false, all thinking and reasoning, and the use of
 “ all our faculties would be entirely at an end;” as to
 any good purpose of life.

We have much reason to pray earnestly to God to be
 delivered from such like distress of infernal craft: but
 however Dr. Clarke does not mean it should come this
 length with us, for he gives us his own word and

AUTHORITY to quiet and compose our minds; " But
" when to demonstration on the one side, there are op-
" posed on the other, only objections raised from our
" want of having adequate ideas of the THINGS them-
" selves, this OUGHT not to be esteemed a real difficul-
" ty." Here lies the remedy provided for our cure;
if any of the doubts or perplexities he has revealed
should happen to disturb us, his WORD OUGHT to be
sufficient to remove them. And that we may not over-
look it, he repeats it again.

" 'Tis directly and clearly demonstrable that SOME-
" THING has been from eternity; all the OBJECTIONS
" therefore RAISED against the eternity of ANY THING;
" grounded MERELY ON OUR WANT OF HAVING AN ADE-
" QUATE idea of eternity, OUGHT to be looked upon as
" of NO REAL SOLIDITY."

But to shew on what solid grounds his authority
does proceed, and therefore OUGHT to be depended on,
he comes to an illustration by parallel cases; or to take
his own words, " Thus in other the like instances." It
is fit we should stop here to observe what he refers to by
other the like instances, because it is a pretty large con-
cession he expects we should make him in these short
terms; first, by admitting or allowing that there are such
questions or difficulties as he has started or created,
concerning the nature of God and his perfections, and
then requiring us to go along with him in " other the
" like instances," comparing these difficulties with such
as are found in mathematical subtilities; to which he
proceeds, " 'Tis demonstrable, for example, that SOME-
" THING must be ACTUALLY infinite"—In the proof of this
proposition he goes no farther, but taking it for grant-
ed " all the metaphysical difficulties therefore, which
" arise usually from applying the measures and rea-
" lations of things finite to what is infinite, and from
" supposing FINITES to be ALIQUOT parts of infinite,
" when INDEED they are NOT PROPERLY so, but only
" as mathematical points to quantity, which have no
" proportion at all, (and from imagining all INFINITES

“ to be equal when in THINGS DISPARATE they MANIFESTLY are not so, an infinite line, being NOT only NOT equal to, but INFINITELY less than infinite surface; and an infinite surface than space infinite in all dimensions) all metaphysical difficulties, I SAY, arising from false suppositions of this kind; OUGHT to be esteemed vain, and of NO FORCE.

“ Again, 'Tis in like manner demonstrable, that quantity is infinitely divisible; all the objections therefore raised by supposing the SUMS TOTAL OF ALL INFINITES to be equal when in DISPARATE parts they MANIFESTLY are not so, and by comparing the IMAGINARY equality or inequality of the NUMBER of the parts of unequal quantities, whose parts have REALLY NO NUMBER AT ALL, they ALL having parts without number; OUGHT to be looked upon as WEAK and altogether INCONCLUSIVE: to ask whether the parts of unequal quantities be equal in number or not, when they have NO NUMBER AT ALL, being the same thing as to ask whether two infinite lines be equal in length or not, that is, whether they end together, when neither of them have any END AT ALL.”

There is something here wanting in expression to complete this paragraph, containing the USE of his observation on difficulties; but the defect is easily enough supplied, as following directly from the course of his argument; that it is as sure that SOMETHING has existed from all eternity, as that quantity is infinitely divisible. I shall not venture to put this conclusion into another form of words, as it is too shocking under these terms to view the TRUTH in that disguise, which the author, by his proposition, has thought fit to cast over it.

We have already observed, that the term of demonstration, or any comparison from mathematical reasoning, is improperly applied to the proof of propositions, whose truth cannot be represented by any external or visible objects; so that we are under no obligation to reply

ply to these "other the like instances," falsely alledged from that science, but only to affirm his own word back upon him. That these mathematical difficulties OUGHT to be confined to their own province in which they have arisen; and if they are there properly examined, it will be found, that mathematical certainty or demonstration, does not extend farther than to propositions, whose truth may be represented by precise and determinate objects of sense; so that our reasonings concerning objects whose limits are beyond our comprehension, cannot produce a strict or proper demonstration, it being suspended on casual suppositions, which leave the mind also in suspense; so it is in regard to his famous example, of its being demonstrable that quantity is infinitely divisible. The terms DEMONSTRABLE and DIVISIBLE are here fallaciously applied, as it cannot be demonstrated that matter or quantity is infinitely divided, upon which condition alone our assent can be fully and clearly given to the example proposed; but however this full assent is presumed upon, particularly in the conduct of that discourse which is now before us, and the consequences arising from hence are difficulties, or rather absurdities in the application or invention of unintelligible terms. Or in other words, if our reasonings in mathematical enquiries are not confined to finite objects which we are able clearly to apprehend, it must follow by supposing we can comprehend objects or their properties, which are not in finite bounds to be judged of by our sight or sense, that our reasonings grounded on this false supposition will produce NONSENSE, as in the abundant specimen above recited for that purpose. "'Tis demonstrable, " for example, a finite SOMETHING must be ACTUALLY infinite: from supposing FINITES to be ALIQUOT parts of IN-FINITE, and the SUMS TOTAL of " all INFINITES to be equal when in DISPARATE parts " they are MANIFESTLY not so"—and so forth to the conclusion of the paragraph, without " ANY END AT " ALL.

The next proposition Dr. Clarke has laid down, as arising in due consequence from the foregoing, is in these words.

2. "There has existed from eternity (some) one unchangeable and independent being."

Setting aside the term (SOME), as derived from SOMETHING, we shall be very far from disputing this great truth with him in any other respect, but by contending, that it was not produced by his first proposition, admitted in the sense he would have it understood, or in any other sense, but as directly implying, that GOD was, and is, and is to come, which is the great article of our religion concealed in it, and again repeated in this his second proposition.

But this does not answer the progress of his demonstration, and therefore he proceeds, "For since SOMETHING must NEEDS have been from eternity, as has been already proved, and is granted on all hands; either there has always existed (SOME) one unchangeable and independent Being, from which all other beings that are, or ever were in the universe, have received their original; or else there has been an infinite succession of changeable and dependent beings, produced one from another, in an endless progression, without any cause at all."

His pretended adversary, the Atheist, will not allow him this distinction, because it supposes the very question in debate; for the Atheist will fix upon his first principle in the matter and motion of the heavens, or of the earth; by which means he will avoid the argument, from the endless subordination of causes, which does then come to an absurd conclusion, upon allowing the division here made, of one independent being, or a series of dependent beings; that is, by admitting the truth as revealed in holy writ. And whosoever among the philosophers did expose the absurdity of an endless subordination of causes, he argued from taking the very same principle as established, which he could

could have got no other way, but by tradition from the sacred records.

The term INDEPENDENT in this proposition, does absolutely preclude the possibility of a demonstration rising from the creature to the Creator, unless by supposition that the material objects of our senses are created, which is admitting what is intended to be proved, as we have already observed: For the Supreme Being independent can have no necessary connection with any thing he has made; and therefore, where there is no necessary connection between the terms of a proposition, no demonstration can ensue. The TRUTH must be given before we can be possessed of it; and to it, when GIVEN, the heavens and the earth bear witness; For *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard: their line is gone out throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* This is the only demonstration from the visible material world, which the truth is capable of having reflected upon it, which is largely pursued in the sacred writings, and particularly in the book of Job.

The third proposition following in the course of Dr. Clarke's Demonstration, is in these terms.

3. "That unchangeable and independent Being, which has existed from eternity, without any external cause of its existence, must be self-existent, that is, necessarily existing."

We are to suppose this proposition different from the foregoing, which we have already granted, though not on the foot of his demonstration; and therefore it lies upon us to examine what these expressions are which distinguish this from the former, as advancing some step nearer towards that full conclusion we are in search of. And here we find an addition is made to the second proposition, in terms asserting, "That unchangeable and independent Being, which has ex-

"isted from eternity, (without any external cause of
 "its existence) must be self-existent, that is, necessarily
 "existing." The words, "without any external cause
 "of its existence," we might be apt to suppose were
 of like signification with independent; and if independent and self-existent are of the same import, as they appear to be, our knowledge is not advanced by its being said, he "must be self-existent, that is, necessarily existing."

But as the discourse must proceed in the language of demonstration, our reason is to be exalted above the subject in view, and not content with HEARING the TRUTH revealed, we are led on to affirm it MUST NECESSARILY BE as our reasonings will conclude.

Before we object any farther to this expression, let us observe how he explains the meaning of it.

"Now to be self-existent, is not to be produced by
 "itself, for that is an express contradiction; but it is,
 "(which is the only idea we can FRAME of self-
 "existence, and without which the WORD seems to
 "have NO SIGNIFICATION at all) IT IS, I SAY, to exist
 "by an ABSOLUTE NECESSITY originally in the nature
 "of the THING itself."

If this definition makes it plainer than it was before, let any man speak who is the wiser for it. It is plain, indeed, he makes a violent attempt to bring some meaning out of it, of which he is labouring with himself to be delivered; but God forbid we should join him in his labour, to which he is inviting us, as follows.

"And this NECESSITY MUST BE ANTECEDENT, not
 "INDEED IN TIME, to the existence of the BEING IT-
 "SELF, because that is eternal; but it MUST BE AN-
 "TECEDENT in the natural order of our ideas to our
 "SUPPOSITION of ITS BEING; that is, this NECESSITY
 "must not barely be consequent upon our SUPPOSI-
 "TION of the existence of SUCH A BEING, (for then
 "it would not be a NECESSITY ABSOLUTELY SUCH in
 "itself, nor be the GROUND OR FOUNDATION of the
 "existence of ANY THING, being, on the contrary,
 "only

“ only a CONSEQUENT of it) but IT MUST ANTECEDENTLY force itself upon us, whether we will or no, even when we are ENDEAVOURING to SUPPOSE, that “ NO SUCH BEING EXISTS”—(we must add) as a NECESSARILY EXISTENT BEING.

That NECESSITY should force itself upon us when we are endeavouring to suppose that no such Being exists as he means by this expression, is undoubtedly a just reward of such endeavours.

But to shew that he means to encourage us effectually to make this attempt with him, he repeats it again.

“ For example, when we are ENDEAVOURING to SUPPOSE that there is NO BEING in the universe that exists NECESSARILY, we always find in our minds, (besides the foregoing DEMONSTRATION of SOMETHING being self-existent, from the impossibility of every THING’S being INDEPENDENT) we always find in our minds, I SAY, some ideas, as of infinity and eternity.”

That we cannot have ideas of infinity and eternity, he has asserted formerly ; and therefore the expression runs “ as of infinity and eternity,” and proceeds, “ Which to remove, that is, to suppose that there is NO BEING, NO SUBSTANCE in the universe, to which these attributes are NECESSARILY inherent, is a contradiction in the very terms :”—although from his words immediately foregoing, we might conclude it could be done ; that is, the ideas, as of infinity and eternity may remain in the mind, when we are ENDEAVOURING to suppose that no SUCH BEING exists to whom they belong. But he concludes, “ For attributes exist only by the existence of the substance to whom they belong. Now, he that can suppose eternity, and immensity, (and consequently the substance by whose existence these attributes exist) removed out of the universe, may, if he please, as easily remove the equality of twice two and four.”

So ends this paragraph of illustration to his third proposition ; and here again we find the conclusion left

out of view : but the way, however, as open as he thought fitting, to conduct us to it, and to bring it out in as plain terms as we can, it is to this purpose :

“ When we are endeavouring to suppose that there
 “ is NO BEING in the universe that exists NECESSARILY,
 “ we always find in our minds a NECESSITY of some
 “ ideas, AS of infinity and eternity ;” so that NECES-
 SITY does retain or produce the other two. Now as
 these attributes of infinity and eternity exist only by
 the existence of a substance, it must follow, that there
 is a substance to which they belong, and that NECES-
 SITY retaining in our minds the ideas AS of infinity
 and eternity, must also introduce a NECESSITY of the
 substance existing, to which these attributes are neces-
 sarily inherent. So that NECESSITY keeping still in
 our minds the ideas AS of infinity and eternity, it
 proves, consequently, the substance by whose existence
 these attributes exist. But if we are not satisfied with
 this positive proof, let us try it NEGATIVELY. “ Now
 “ he that can suppose eternity and immensity (and
 “ consequently the substance by whose existence these
 “ attributes exist) removed out of the universe, may,
 “ if HE PLEASE, as easily remove the relation of equa-
 “ lity between twice two and four.”

Therefore there is ANTECEDENT NECESSITY ABSO-
 LUTELY SUCH IN ITSELF, THE GROUND OR FOUNDA-
 TION OF A NECESSARILY EXISTENT BEING.

Such is this monstrous birth, delivered in nonsen-
 sical, perplexed, contradictory, and blasphemous terms,
 from which, as necessary to its being, it cannot be
 freed, to afford any other view of its deformity, but
 what must disturb and distract the understanding, in-
 vited to combat with impossibilities and contradictions,
 and to surrender our faith in God, to embrace a for-
 gery of infernal craftiness.

After labouring through the darkness of the last
 proposition, and its corresponding subtilities of illustra-
 tion, requiring something more than the utmost stretch
 of our understandings to comprehend them, we must
 not

not yet expect any ease to our minds from this Demonstration, which proceeds, according to the rules of SCIENCE, to exhibit some corollaries or consequences arising from the foregoing proposition: and as it is likely he was in doubt, that he had not sufficiently forged out that idea which he designed we should FRAME of his NECESSITY, he makes another trial with us over again to the same purpose.

“ From this third proposition it follows,——

“ First, That the only TRUE IDEA of a self-existent Being, is the idea of a BEING, the supposition of whose NOT EXISTING is an express contradiction.”

We will not dispute with him about allowing what is asserted in these words, as a legitimate consequence of what has been already demonstrated according to his method; for it naturally follows, that the endeavouring to suppose no such Being exists as he speaks of, will at length produce a supposition of his not existing, and this supposition must produce an express contradiction; and from this express contradiction we have the TRUE IDEA which he recommends to us to FRAME according to his direction.

But lest his meaning should not be thoroughly apprehended by us, he has his proof for it in the usual style, and nearly in the same words. “ For since it is “ absolutely impossible but there MUST BE SOMEWHAT “ self-existent; that is, which exists by the NECESSITY “ of its own nature; it is plain, that THAT NECESSITY “ cannot be a NECESSITY consequent upon any foregoing supposition, (because NOTHING can be ANTECEDENT to that which is self-existent; NO, not its “ OWN WILL, so as to be the cause of its own existence) “ but it must be a NECESSITY, absolutely SUCH in its “ own nature. Now, a NECESSITY, not RELATIVELY “ OR CONSEQUENTIALLY, but ABSOLUTELY SUCH in “ its OWN NATURE, is NOTHING ELSE, but its being “ a PLAIN impossibility, or implying a contradiction “ to suppose the contrary.”

How the establishing a supposition of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY (or FATE, as the same LYE has been called) should

should prove a leading step in the demonstration of the Being of God, let any man say who attends to it.

There is a grievous difficulty in our way in contending against the insufficiency and falshood of this insidious imposture, that we cannot disengage or unveil the real design and tendency of it, without being continually alarmed at the danger of offending against the Majesty of God, by bringing forth the meaning of those terms into clearer light, which are daringly applied to his Holy Name in disguise.

As particularly in this place, what the author desires to establish, is an idea, or rather a method of FRAMING an idea of an express contradiction, by contending that the want of such an idea is an express contradiction. His whole address terminates in recommending NECESSITY, absolutely such in its own nature, as the surest direction for comprehending the self-sufficient Being: that this NECESSITY is not relatively or consequently, but ABSOLUTELY SUCH in its own nature, that is, in the nature of the self-sufficient Being; implying hereby, in the most detestable terms of satanical craft and delusion, a want of power in him to whom all power doth belong, because he cannot be otherwise than eternal and infinite, omnipotent and all-sufficient.

Such is the subtilty of this presumptuous reasoning, recoiling upon itself in blasphemous contradictions.

There is one expression in the foregoing paragraph already quoted, which does require our particular attention, because it opens a fresh magazine of falshood, from whence hereafter great supplies in that sort of ware are to be drawn. This expression lies in a parenthesis ("Because NOTHING can be antecedent to " that which is self-existent;" — (Here we might expect he would have excepted NECESSITY, as he intended we should make SOMETHING of it) "No, not its " OWN WILL." — And then he adds, "so as to be the " cause of its own existence.")

But we may by diligent observation perceive the reason, why his NECESSITY was not excepted; be-

cause, as we have before observed, he has laboured it into the FRAME of an idea of the self-existent Being; and therefore, according to his principle of NECESSITY being the ground or foundation of existence, it must be also supposed ANTECEDENT to the WILL of the self-existent Being; that is, as we must interpret it, of God.

Here is the mouth of the great abyſs cautiously opened; the notable suppositions and impostures, which will issue from this profound depth of reasoning, are in due time to appear.

The example illustrating his idea of NECESSITY, may not be passed over without some notice. We had it before, in the close of his discourse on his last proposition; and it is again relied upon here to do signal service in the way of a mathematical argument. "For instance, the relation of equality between twice two and four is an ABSOLUTE NECESSITY:"—so that it is as clear, there is an ABSOLUTE NECESSITY, as that there is a relation of equality between twice two and four, which of course he concludes no man will dispute. But this need not so readily be granted to him; for twice two is four, by the expression, differing in no other way, than as a literal notation of the number differs from a numerical figure of it; for the very same idea is produced by the words twice two, which arises from the word four. So that the necessity of twice two being equal to four, is the same that a number should be equal to itself; and he who will solemnly affirm, that a number is equal to itself, or that there is a relation of equality between a number and itself; we should suspect he has a design, either to amuse us with nonsense, or to impose upon us with a lye; and this may very well illustrate his idea of NECESSITY, as being equal to the relation of equality between twice two and four.

We have already observed his method of FRAMING proceeds by confessing or laying down the TRUTH, involved and concealed by sophistical, unintelligible, or specious

specious terms, to overturn it by an exprefs contradiction, covered by confident pretences of profound and earnest search after it, according to his own way, by which it can never be found; and this is the whole secret of his address in execution of this eminent performance of unwearied industry and artifice.

Since the TRUTH can never be discovered by following him through the perplexed and intricate mazes of error, proceeding still farther, as the treatise increases, into more gross and impious absurdities, there may be sufficient cause from the specimen of his reasonings already exhibited, to give over our pursuit, as the method of his design is clearly pointed out, and the task of struggling with incessant contradictions is exceedingly unpleasant, and more especially distressing, in exposing them as applied to the sacred name of God.

But if farther satisfaction should be wanted of his unmerciful address to puzzle and distract our understandings, let us read the paragraph immediately following what we have quoted, and the subsequent corollaries, or consequences, to his last proposition, the first of them only being as yet recited. The paragraph is as follows.

“ If ANY one NOW asks, WHAT SORT of idea the
 “ idea of that Being is, the supposition of whose not
 “ existing is thus an exprefs contradiction; I ANSWER,
 “ 'tis the FIRST and SIMPLEST idea we can possibly
 “ FRAME; an idea NECESSARILY and ESSENTIALLY
 “ included or presupposed, as a SINE QUA NON, in
 “ every other idea whatsoever; an idea, which (unless
 “ we forbear thinking at all) we cannot possibly ex-
 “ tirpate or remove out of our minds, of a MOST
 “ SIMPLE BEING, ABSOLUTELY ETERNAL and INFI-
 “ NITE, ORIGINAL and INDEPENDENT.”

All this we must take for his simplest idea; but howsoever he will not let us have it, without the usual high-sounding proof along with it.

“ For

“ For he who supposes there is no original independent Being in the universe, supposes a contradiction, has been shewn already; and that he who supposes there MAY POSSIBLY be NO ETERNAL and INFINITE Being in the universe, supposes likewise a contradiction, is evident from hence, (besides that these two attributes do necessarily FOLLOW from SELF-ORIGINATE independent existence, as shall be shewn hereafter) that when he has DONE his UTMOST in ENDEAVOURING to IMAGINE that NO SUCH BEING exists, he cannot avoid IMAGINING an ETERNAL and INFINITE NOTHING; that is, he will IMAGINE eternity and immensity removed out of the UNIVERSE, and yet at the same time they still continue there, as has been ABOVE DISTINCTLY explained.”

This would be most abominable nonsense, if it were not most execrable blasphemy.

Here follows a digression, claiming a triumph over the Cartesians for a defeat by his last argument, with which, as he says, “ they have been greatly perplexed.”—No wonder indeed, if they took it for an argument. But that nothing might escape, which would embarrass our understandings, he broaches another lye, as the natural consequence of that perplexity to which he had driven these Cartesians; one monster begetting another, by their asserting, as he calls it, “ That most INTOLERABLE absurdity of MATTER being a NECESSARY BEING.”

After a little descant in the usual style, he leaves this matter with us, promising, “ For that ’tis INDEED absolutely impossible and contradictory, to suppose MATTER necessarily existing, shall be DEMONSTRATED PRESENTLY.”

He has a note corresponding to this digression, which ought not to be overlooked, as being very much in the same spirit and terms of his own WORK. The author cited is a disciple of Cartesius, Regis, in his metaphysics, whom we find, in this instance of argumentation quoted from him, solely driven and compelled by
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the subtilty of his ideas, to illustrate them by the idea of an enchanted castle.

But to pass on to the next corollary.

2dly, " From hence it follows, that there is NO MAN
" WHATSOEVER who makes any use of his reason, but
" may easily become more certain of a supreme inde-
" pendent cause, than he can be of any thing else be-
" sides his own existence."

If we do not very much mistake, a SUPREME INDEPENDENT CAUSE, is the subject or TRUTH which he proposes to demonstrate; and if no man whatsoever, who makes use of his reason, can be ignorant of it, his demonstration is only fitting for those persons, who will not make any good use of their reason, and to such only it ought to be addressed; as we have a pertinent example in the next corollary, requiring an absolute surrender of our understandings before we can take any hold of it.

3dly, " Hence we may observe, that our FIRST certainty of the existence of God, does not arise from
" THIS, that in the idea we FRAME of him in OUR
" MINDS, OR RATHER, in the definition WE MAKE of
" the WORD (GOD) as signifying a Being of all possible
" perfections, we include self-existence; but from
" hence, that 'tis DEMONSTRABLE NEGATIVELY, that
" neither can all things have arisen out of NOTHING,
" nor can they have depended one on another in an
" endless succession, and also POSITIVELY, that there
" is SOMETHING in the UNIVERSE, ACTUALLY EXIST-
" ING WITHOUT US. The SUPPOSITION of whose NOT
" EXISTING, plainly implies a contradiction."

The subsequent proof or illustration does well agree to what is advanced in these unintelligible terms, being laboured out with such variety of confused, absurd, and blasphemous nonsense, as makes it unfit for any farther animadversion.

This brings him to his fourth consequence, which he promised to demonstrate to us, " presently."

" 4thly,

“ 4thly, From hence it follows, that the material world cannot possibly be the first and original Being, uncreated, independent, and of itself eternal.”

In the conduct of his arguments on this subject, he goes into contest with modern and ancient Atheists, Toland and Spinoza, Mr. Blount and Ocellus Lucanus, in whose company he may safely be trusted, being well able to confound them, contradicting and blaspheming, with contradictions, blasphemies, and jargon, equal to their own; but as no man of an honest mind can have any concern among them, we shall not here take any farther notice of their contentions.

Nine propositions follow, besides those already examined, which, with their consequences or corollaries, compose the remaining part of his demonstration of the being and attributes of God.

There is very little in the proof or illustration of them by his method, different from the terms we have considered and rejected; excepting only what arises from his combating with the aforesaid Atheists, and others who are introduced with their monstrous suppositions, conducing to the amazement and disturbance of any sober person who would give his attention to them, of which in the least degree they are utterly unworthy; being indeed nothing but the lies, forgeries, and false conceits of men, either uninformed, or ignorant of the truth, or of others much worse, who knew it, but would not receive it in the love of it, chusing to betake themselves to their own inventions of framing and believing a lye, to overturn and supplant it.

That just abhorrence with which we ought to regard this work under our consideration, if it has its due effect upon us, will dispose our minds to seek for rest and satisfaction, and profitable instruction in true wisdom and knowledge, where it may be clearly and readily discovered, in that sacred book, which, by the mercy of God, is delivered into our hands, with his authority along with it, witnessed, acknowledged, and confirmed by many infallible proofs, sufficient to convict

viſt hereafter thoſe perſons, who may at preſent diſſemble conviction, being hardened through their obſtinacy or their pride, to deny and gainſay it.

But although we need not farther contend againſt his propoſitions concerning the nature of God, and his perfections or moral attributes, (of which we have the account ſurreptitiouſly taken from Holy Writ, being alledged by him as conſequences from his idea of NECESSITY throughout the courſe of his impious endeavours) we are not yet diſcharged from looking after his deſign, which goes a much greater length than mere ſpeculation, by the invention of FRAMING ideas; for if theſe framed ideas can be communicated, they are not to lie idle in our underſtandings, they muſt of NECESSITY produce an effect ſuitable to the original from whence they came: and howſoever he has failed in his promiſes or profeſſions, of bringing forth the truth by his method of demonſtrations, we ſhall find an invariable correſpondence in ſuch corollaries or conſequences which he draws from them, as may be juſtly expected from his endeavours.

The frame and texture of his work, as has been already obſerved, is ſo thoroughly ordered to diſtreſs and perplex the underſtanding of any man abuſed or deceived into an opinion of his honeſty and veracity, that whoſoever, from this conceived opinion, will labour in digeſting his abſurdities and contradictions, ſtill believing he is in the way of truth, will of courſe be betrayed to ſurrender his judgment, and ſo to give this dangerous advantage againſt himſelf, that he will be ready to embrace ſuch concluſions as he is confidently aſſured upon the ſame authority are derived in due proceſs of reaſoning, from what he takes to be already eſtabliſhed: but if our minds are opened to an impartial view of the crafty deluſion contrived and deſigned to paſs upon us, the danger is over, the leaſt degree of attention to the purpoſes of his project, will enable us to ſee through the whole cheat and impoſture, which is concealed only by artful and ſpecious pretences.

Before

Before we come to the conclusions which are laid down as the foundation of his ensuing treatise, which is intitled, "A Discourse concerning the unalterable Obligations of NATURAL RELIGION, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation," it will be requisite to take a view of his 12th proposition, and his proof of it, which opens the way by establishing some preliminary suppositions which are to be carried on for the support of his design.

"The Supreme Cause and Author of all things MUST OF NECESSITY be a Being of infinite goodness, justice, and truth, and all other moral perfections; such as become the supreme governor and judge of the world."

Setting aside his evil method of expression, we have no room to dispute with him about this proposition, nor to require any of his inventions for the support of it; but the only artifice likely to succeed in overturning the plainest truths, that are most readily embraced by our understandings, when proposed to them, is to bring them into doubt and suspicion by elaborate contrivances, for their proof and illustration, of which they no ways stand in need: and such we have abundantly afforded to us in the following discourse upon this proposition.

That God is possessed of all perfections, "such as become the supreme Governor and Judge of the world," we are ready to acknowledge, and consent fully to it; yet even by this concession we are in danger of fallacy, by going along with him in his attempts, to shew what perfections he conceives are agreeable to this character of the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world. That God is good, and just, and true, in respect to all his dealings with us, the experience and conscience of every man among us is ready to bear witness; but it is certain in this case, that our knowledge of the word and will of God, is the sure foundation of our gratitude, and hope, and trust in him: take this foundation away, which is the only one we can rest
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upon, and then strange proofs indeed must be alledged for our confidence; of which we have a pregnant example to the purpose now before us, by the establishment of this 12th proposition, with a sort of demonstration, in his peculiar style and method of argument.

To convince us in his way, of the infinite goodness, justice, and truth of the Supreme Cause and Author of all things, he advances, "That there are different relations of things, one towards another, is as certain as that there are different things in the world. That from these different relations of different things, there NECESSARILY arises an agreement or disagreement of some things to others, or a fitness or unfitness of the application of different things or different relations one to another, is likewise as certain, as that there is any difference in the nature of things, or that different things do exist.

"Further, that there is a fitness, or suitability of certain circumstances to certain persons, and an unsuitableness of others, founded in the nature of things, and the qualifications of persons, ANTECEDENT TO WILL and to all ARBITRARY OR POSITIVE APPOINTMENT WHATSOEVER, MUST unavoidably be acknowledged by every one, who will not affirm, that its equally fit and suitable in the nature and reason of things, that an innocent BEING should be extremely and eternally miserable, as that it should be free from such misery.

"There is THEREFORE such a THING as fitness and unfitness, ETERNALLY, NECESSARILY, and UNCHANGEABLY in the nature and reason of THINGS."

Perhaps there is not any undertaking more difficult or distressing, than to sift out the arguments in this master-piece of cunning composition, and after all the labour that can be bestowed upon it, there is nothing to be had we can lay hold upon, but a Form or FRAME of evil speaking, compounded of expressions without any signification, but of wind and confusion.

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To such persons as have stood long in admiration of the abilities of this extraordinary writer, it would appear no doubt a rash, proud, or passionate censure, to pronounce without farther examination, that the words now cited from him, are most impious, and execrable, and blasphemous nonsense, and yet surely they deserve not a more mild animadversion: for although he has made it difficult as possible to enter at all, or to affirm there is any precise meaning in, his premises, yet we have a conclusion, which is also without any meaning but what belongs to a LYE, which is here forged out to be the foundation of a wonderful superstructure of impiety and irreligion: but the words of his proposition will be sufficient to convict him, and to cast that light upon his artifice which will dissolve and disperse it.

His pretended design is to prove, that God is of infinite goodness, justice, and truth; yet the scheme of his argument is framed for modelling and circumscribing him in the exertion of these his perfections within such limits, as are suitable to our apprehensions grounded entirely upon our own reasonings: his method for establishing these limits, is by a supposition which he makes no doubt will pass upon us; "That there are different relations of things one towards another, is as certain, as that there are different things in the world." What these different relations of different things are, what is the agreement or disagreement of some things to others, what fitness or unfitness of the application of different things, or different relations one to another is here to be understood, was not for his purpose to let us into; all that he meant was, that we should conceive SOMETHING is signified by them: taking THIS along with us, he proceeds "Farther, that there is a fitness or suitableness of certain circumstances to certain persons, and an unsuitableness to others, founded in the nature of things, and qualifications of persons, ANTECEDENT TO WILL and to ALL ARBITRARY OR POSITIVE APPOINTMENT WHATSOEVER,

“EVER, must unavoidably be acknowledged by every
 “one, who will not affirm, that it is equally fit and
 “suitable in the nature and reason of things, that an
 “INNOCENT BEING should be extremely and eternally
 “miserable, as that it should be free from such mi-
 “fery.”

To return the best answer we can to this insidious argumentation, we must endeavour to affix some certain meaning to his words, which he has himself most industriously avoided; the words (THING and THINGS) have been of much use to him in the foregoing part of his treatise, being applied in such manner, that no certain thing or things could be fixed upon as intended by them: and in aid of these useful terms of his art, he has now introduced some others above repeated of equal insignificancy, RELATIONS, FITNESS and UNFITNESS, AGREEMENT and DISAGREEMENT, SUITABLENESS and UNSUITABLENESS, added to THING, THINGS, and the NATURE and REASON of THINGS, compose a sort of language so perfectly unintelligible, that he might conclude it would amuse our understandings, without our being able to confute, what is not to be understood: so that if he had not given us an example for a sort of illustration to what he means, we might indeed have been absolutely at a loss to discover at what mark he was aiming.

His position in express terms is to this effect, that no person will affirm “That ’tis equally fit and suitable
 “in the nature and reason of things, that an innocent
 “Being should be extremely and eternally miserable,
 “as that it should be free from such misery.”—As he concludes, this cannot be disputed. For an immediate consequence of this example established, he infers,
 “There is THEREFORE such a THING as FITNESS and
 “UNFITNESS, ETERNALLY, NECESSARILY, and UN-
 “CHANGEABLY in the NATURE and REASON of THINGS.”

From the terms of this proposition we find he acknowledges “the Supreme Cause and Author of all
 “things;” therefore the word (THING or THINGS) is impro-

improperly applied to signify the nature or the perfections of him, who is the Creator or Maker of ALL THINGS; for they are produced according to his Will, upon which the nature or reason of Things whatsoever it may be does absolutely depend: so that with respect to their Creator, there are no different relations of Things, no fitness or unfitness in them antecedent to his Will, who is the Author of all Things.

The supposition which gives the form of an argument to this perverse reasoning, and to all other reasonings of the like sort and tendency, does depend upon this old and crafty imposture, That a Thing or Things, after being created, are independent of him that made them, and have therefore among themselves RELATIONS ANTECEDENT TO WILL, and all ARBITRARY and POSITIVE APPOINTMENT WHATSOEVER; as he in most daring terms of contradiction does express it.

But it does not come up to his purpose, that we should understand this peremptory assertion, of things only that are inanimate or irrational; we must consider the example he has given us, as pointing out most clearly what it is he means to establish; which is; A method of proceeding by an obligation derived from the nature and reason of Things, directing the actions of the Supreme Governor and Judge of the world, in his dealings with his creatures, who are accountable to him for their actions, or behaviour in life.

To this effect he argues, that it cannot be presumed any one will affirm " That it is equally fit and suitable
" in the nature and reason of Things, that an innocent
" Being should be extremely and eternally miserable,
" as that it should be free from such misery."

He has not told us who this Innocent Being is, but has left us at large to look for him in the universe; nor has he said who is to pronounce upon him, that he is an Innocent Being; yet it is necessary for us to be satisfied in both these particulars.

Further, By his saying, " That an Innocent Being
" should be extremely and eternally miserable;" with-

out farther explanation it becomes uncertain, whether he means his misery should be inflicted upon him in the way of punishment, or that he should be created and left in a state of misery without any offence committed against his Maker.

In this latter sense it contradicts the terms of his proposition, asserting "the Supreme Cause and Author of all Things, is of infinite goodness, and justice," which are inconsistent with this supposition. Again, It cannot answer his purpose by giving us this example, that he meant this Innocent Being should be a man, who did endeavour sincerely to live according to the Will of his Maker as known to him, which is the best title to innocence we can lay claim to; for this would imply a contradiction closely connected with the supposition, that by the Will of his Maker he should be extremely and eternally miserable, though endeavouring sincerely to live according to his Will: and therefore this Innocent Being he speaks of, must be the judge of his own innocence, by living according to the fitness and unfitness of Things, esteemed by him pursuant to the foregoing supposition independent of their Creator, and himself also according to the different relations of different Things at liberty to follow his OWN WILL in his actions; from whence every wicked man, and the enemy of mankind himself, may put in his claim to be that INNOCENT BEING Dr. Clarke has mentioned.

So that from this interpretation, which is the only one we can allow him, we will affirm, in opposition to what he expected, that it may be fit and suitable, his supposed Innocent Being should be extremely and eternally miserable, by punishment inflicted for apostacy or rebellion, consistently with the infinite goodness, and justice, and truth, of the Supreme Governor and Judge of the world: and upon denying his instance, we have good cause to overthrow his conclusion, inferred from it, "That there is such a thing as Fitness and Unfitness, Eternally, Necessarily and Unchangeably in the Nature and Reason of Things;" or, as he had before expressed

expressed it, "Antecedent to Will, and all Arbitrary
"and Positive Appointment whatsoever,"—by pronouncing upon it, That it is a most false, detestable, and blasphemous assertion.

Taking it for granted that he would find the success he hoped for in establishing his last conclusion, we need not wonder at any subsequent attempts for carrying the whole of his scheme into execution. That bold and most violent assertion against the Truth and Majesty of God, being allowed him with impunity, would lay a sure foundation, according to his method of working, for any other superstructure of falsehood and imposture, how gross soever he might judge fitting to raise upon it: and such he is not slow in producing; for so it follows immediately to his purpose: "Now, what
"these relations of things ABSOLUTELY and NECES-
"RILY ARE IN THEMSELVES, THAT also they APPEAR
"TO BE to the understanding of all INTELLIGENT
"BEINGS."

That we should judge of the nature and properties of the external objects of our senses from their FORMS, trusting entirely to our own imagination, to direct us in our actions and behaviour among them; believing they really are what they "APPEAR TO BE" by sight; this is a position of such consequence to his hypothesis, that he has chosen to place it as closely connected with his last conclusion; but this ONE is of such an enormous size to be swallowed at once, he has chosen to divide it into two, with a salvo or slight covering for each; for it would have been too much to have let them pass from him altogether barefaced. However, he might hope his caution would be apt to do him little damage, since possibly every one of his readers would keep himself out of such company as would make a doubt of what he had said; for in this case he proposes to "except those only who under-
"stand THINGS TO BE WHAT THEY ARE NOT; that
"is, whose understandings are either very imperfect
"or very much depraved; and by THIS UNDER-

“STANDING, OR KNOWLEDGE of the NATURAL and
 “NECESSARY RELATIONS of THINGS, the ACTIONS
 “LIKEWISE of ALL INTELLIGENT BEINGS are con-
 “stantly directed, (which BY the BY is the true ground
 “and foundation of MORALITY.)”—Then comes in
 the salvo, a notable one indeed, “UNLESS their WILL
 “be corrupted by particular interest or affection, or
 “swayed by some unreasonable and prevailing lust.”

That the ground of his morality came in BY the BY, we will not dispute with him; but God forbid we should build upon it.

The way being now sufficiently cleared for proving his proposition, according to the method he had designed, he has but little to do in leading us towards it, through the course of such arguments as arise necessarily from his relations and fitness of things; for as he tells us, that he had before proved the Supreme Cause
 “MUST of NECESSITY have infinite knowledge, and
 “the perfection of wisdom; so that 'tis absolutely im-
 “possible he should ERR, or be in any respect IGNO-
 “RANT of the TRUE RELATIONS and FITNESS or UN-
 “FITNESS of THINGS, or be any ways deceived or
 “imposed upon; HEREIN 'tis evident, he MUST of
 “NECESSITY, (meaning not a NECESSITY of FATE,”
 —(a pretty sort of an insinuation come in BY the BY, as if there were a NECESSITY of FATE) “but such a
 “MORAL NECESSITY as I SAID before was consistent
 “with the most perfect liberty) DO always what he
 “KNOWS to be FITTEST to be done; that is, he MUST
 “ACT always according to the STRICTEST RULES of
 “infinite goodness, justice, and truth, and all other
 “moral perfections.”

This is strict arguing, according to his own principles.

We need not follow him through the proof he makes
 “in particular” of the divine perfections mentioned
 in this last proposition, his style being very nearly the
 same throughout the course of it, or rather more of-
 fensive, in treating particularly of the justice of God.

But

But that nothing might be omitted that could be of service to his cause, he adds a reflection, doing justice to his own performance, as so thoroughly perfect, that, as he says, "To this argumentation *a priori* there can be opposed but ONE objection that I know of, drawn, on the contrary, *a posteriori*, from experience and observation of the unequal distribution of Providence in the world."

However, to dissolve this objection, he tells us, that Plutarch, and other heathen writers, have vindicated the Divine Providence, even with respect to this present world: then he adds, "The objection is entirely wide of the question; for, concerning the Justice and Goodness of God, (as of any governor whatsoever) no judgment is to be made from a partial view of a few small portions of his dispensations, but from an intire consideration of the whole; and consequently not only the short duration of this present state, but moreover all that is past, and that is still to come, must be taken into the account, and then every thing will clearly appear just and right."

Setting aside his parenthesis, we have no objection to this comfortable and conclusive argument, excepting only, that as we know from whence it came, we shall be very loth to acknowledge any respect due to him for it.

His demonstration or argumentation A PRIORI, as he calls it, is here ended; and for his having but that one objection he told us, he has added indeed a very sufficient answer. But for the term A PRIORI, though we shall not at present dispute with mathematicians about it, yet we cannot subscribe to his title to it, in that way he designs we should understand it of his work. That "the Supreme Cause and Author of all things," and his perfections, should be demonstrated *a priori*, that is, from some other cause prior to him, is a consequence fit enough to follow from his "ORIGINAL FITNESS and AGREEABLENESS,"—which, he says, "he had before shewn to be NECESSARILY in
"NATURE;

"NATURE;" and therefore whoever takes his word for demonstration, he has before his eyes what he must FIRST believe.

But there is another sense in which this scientific term may be understood, and applied to such sort of argumentation, as descended A PRIORI, the old ancestor of falshood, to whom it belongs, to make out his opposition to the truth by contradictions and lies.

We are now come to Dr. Clarke's general reflections, arising "from this account of the moral attributes of GOD;" and by what we have seen in his way of argumentation, all surprize may be over at any thing his style does produce, in consequence of his positions already advanced. As an instance of that monstrous presumption he has arrived at, in the first of these corollaries, or consequences, "It follows,

"1st. That altho' all the actions of GOD are free, and consequently the exercise of his moral attributes cannot be said to be NECESSARY, in the same SENSE of NECESSITY, as his existence and eternity are NECESSARY; yet these moral attributes are REALLY and TRULY NECESSARY, by such a NECESSITY as though it be not at all inconsistent with liberty, yet is equally certain, infallible, and to be depended upon, as even the existence itself, or the eternity of GOD."

These two sorts of NECESSITY are proposed to exercise our understandings, in making out the difference between them: but lest we should not conceive the latter NECESSITY to be full as strong as the foregoing, he has a third sort to bind it upon us; for so it soon after follows: "It is nevertheless as TRULY and ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE for GOD not to do, (or to do any thing contrary to) what his moral attributes require him to do, as if he was REALLY not a FREE but a NECESSARY AGENT. And the reason hereof is plain, because infinite knowledge, power, and goodness, in conjunction, may, notwithstanding the most perfect freedom and choice, act with altogether
"as

“ as much certainty and steadiness, as EVEN the NECESSITY OF FATE CAN BE SUPPOSED TO DO.”—— Here is a comparison indeed very suitable to his purpose, by this third sort of NECESSITY OF FATE, which he mentions again in a few lines after those already repeated.

To repeat the expressions we meet with is shocking, though the disrespectfulness of them be disguised by his usual address. Thus he tells us (“ No man PRAYS “ to him to be omnipresent, or THANKS him for being omnipotent, or knowing all things.”)—— We can easily see what sort of defence would be made for this language ; yet, howsoever palliated, it is unwarrantable, insolent, and blasphemous.

Whoever will be at the pains of reading over the whole paragraph containing the first of his general conclusions, and considering it in a proper light, he will find it equal, in boldness of sophistry and imposture, to what might be expected from his foregoing propositions.

But, to finish this paragraph with an air of modesty, which he means to cast over this important part of his work, he concludes,—“ This, I HUMBLY CONCEIVE, “ is a very INTELLIGIBLE account of the moral attributes of God, satisfactory to the MIND, and without “ PERPLEXITY and CONFUSION of IDEAS.”

It is pretty well known to those who have conversed in the world, that this phrase, “ I humbly conceive,” is the common style of an insinuating pleader, making shew of submission to the judgment of his hearers, after he has laboured what he could to dictate to them in the most peremptory and violent assertions ; and in this sense of the phrase importing the contrary to what the words express, perhaps no man ever had a better title to it, than the author from whom it is now quoted, as his REASONINGS and DEMONSTRATIONS have arisen from a cause very different from humble conceptions.

But he gains a great point indeed, if this humble form of address will persuade us to believe what he introduces by it, to take his word that he has given us of his own self-sufficiency, “a very intelligible account of the moral attributes of God, satisfactory to the mind, and without perplexity and confusion of ideas.”

We must be satisfied that his head was of a peculiar texture, to have been able for the conception and delivery of such incoherent, inconclusive, and contradictory ideas, as compose this Treatise of his Reasonings, which are most unintelligible and unsatisfactory, with endless perplexity, confusion, and contradiction: therefore we cannot chuse but to understand him ironically, speaking to himself in triumph for what he had performed; and with reference also to whomsoever he had led along with him blindfolded through his Demonstrations, that such a person having taken them for TRUTH, his mind is ready to acquiesce in his AUTHORITY, and to believe them all “a very intelligible account.”

Three or four other consequences or corollaries are drawn as general conclusions from his work, suitable to the usual form and style of his composition. His address in these conclusions is equally refined and subtle, as any we have hitherto observed in his unwearied endeavours for undermining the TRUTH, in order to support it by his spurious mathematical demonstrations.

His principal design in these corollaries is to fix it upon our minds, That altho' GOD is a FREE AGENT, yet he is a NECESSARY AGENT; or, to take it literally in his own words;

“2dly. From hence it follows, that although God is a most perfectly FREE AGENT, yet he cannot but DO ALWAYS what is BEST and WISEST in the WHOLE. The reason is evident, because perfect wisdom and goodness are as STEADY and CERTAIN principles of action, as NECESSITY ITSELF.

It

It is pretty clear what sort of comfortable doctrines may arise from the foregoing position; for if we determine from our understanding and knowledge, “of the natural and necessary relations of things, (by which the actions LIKEWISE of ALL intelligent beings are constantly directed) what is best and wisest in the WHOLE;”—it may be very useful at the present to make us easy, as to all future consequences of our actions.

In the last of these conclusions from his reasonings upon the moral attributes of GOD, he repeats what he means we should now admit he has demonstratively confirmed; which is indeed a point of such consequence, that if we are disposed to agree to it, it may justly be deemed a recompence for all the toil of his indefatigable perseverance, in establishing error by incessant contradictions. His words are,

“Lastly. From what has been said upon this head it follows, that the TRUE GROUND and foundation of all ETERNAL MORAL OBLIGATIONS is THIS, That the same reasons (viz. the forementioned NECESSARY and ETERNAL different relations, which different things bear one to another, and the consequent fitness or unfitness of the application of different things, unavoidably arising from that difference of the things themselves) these same reasons, I SAY, which always NECESSARILY do determine the Will of GOD, as hath been before shewn, OUGHT also constantly to determine the Will of all subordinate intelligent beings.”

We have already observed the contradiction arising from the blasphemous supposition of the Will of GOD being determined NECESSARILY by what he calls the Necessary and Eternal different Relations which different Things bear to each other; which presumptuous assertion serves, by his way of reasoning, to point out one and the same rule to be observed in the actions of GOD towards his rational creatures, and for directing them in their behaviour towards him, and to

one another; all eternal moral obligations, or the motives influencing or directing the actions of ALL INTELLIGENT BEINGS being the same NECESSARY and ETERNAL different relations of different things.

Here we find he has placed God and Man upon a level, as to the principles of their actions; and as he has asserted the will of God is determined by these necessary relations, so they "OUGHT also CONSEQUENTLY" to determine the will of all subordinate intelligent beings,"—who must therefore understand these eternal and different relations as perfectly as God himself; for so he has before affirmed, that "what these Relations of Things absolutely and necessarily are in themselves, THAT also they appear to be to the understanding of ALL INTELLIGENT BEINGS,"—unless, as he allows, they are distempered in their understandings: so far then, according to his doctrine, the understanding of God and man is upon a level.

Now we have arrived to the very summit of his ambitious and arduous undertaking, and are at length presented with this tempting fruit of his long-laboured Demonstrations.

In the conclusion of this part of his work, we have a reason alledged for this method he has taken of opposing Atheists by demonstration; "Since the most considerable Atheists that ever appeared in the world, and the pleaders for UNIVERSAL FATALITY, have thought fit to argue in this way, it is reasonable and necessary, that they should be opposed in their own way;"—which is saying, in other words, that if Atheists and Infidels attack the Defenders of God's Truth with lies and impostures, they also should betake themselves to the like weapons; "it being most certain, that no argumentation, of what kind soever, can possibly be made use of on the side of error, but may also be used, with much greater advantage, on the behalf of truth."—So that if one inconclusive or false argument will contribute to maintain another, such sort of argumentation will do much more service when

when alledged in behalf of the truth; which nearly corresponds with a passage relating to imperfections, remarked in his Preface, and shews it to be of a piece with his Conclusion, so that one may be brought to confirm the other.

His last paragraph mentions some assistance that men may have, that are not such able masters of demonstration, as to go along with him in those paths of knowledge which he has pointed out. For the comfort of such persons he ventures to tell them, " BUT THIS " IS NOT ALL. God has moreover finally, by a clear " and express revelation of himself, brought down " from heaven by his own Son, our blessed Lord and " Redeemer, and suited to every capacity and understanding, put to silence the ignorance of the foolish, " and the vanity of sceptical and profane men; and by " declaring to us himself his own nature and attributes, " has effectually prevented all mistakes which the weakness of our reason, the negligence of our application, " the corruption of our nature, or the false philosophy " of wicked and profane men might have led us into, " and so has infallibly furnished us with sufficient " knowledge to perform our duty in this life, and to " obtain our happiness in that which is to come."

It might strike us with surprize to account for it, how these expressions should fall from him, in direct terms superseding the necessity of his endeavours. But he had long since learned to have no fear about contradictions, and this wonderful passage from his pen, served in the end of his treatise, to steer the foregoing pages through the difficulties they might encounter, in passing through the hands of such men, as would not otherwise be prevailed upon, to receive his book instead of the Gospel.

Having observed the insufficiency of Dr. Clarke's method of Demonstration, by his establishment of ANTECEDENT NECESSITY as the principle from whence he argues in proving the existence of God, it will not be difficult

difficult to discover, whence he has assumed this principle to be the support and foundation of his work.

As we are more certain of our own existence, than we can be of any other thing existing, which is the object of our senses, that argument which we would fix upon to lead us to the knowledge of God, would begin from our reasonings about our own nature, and those circumstances in which we find ourselves placed. The least attention to our condition will convince us, that we are not sufficient to procure that ease or comfort, or gratification of our appetites, in which the welfare of our present state does consist; whence of course it must follow, that no man can suppose himself INDEPENDENT, which is, in other words, sufficient as of, or in himself, to be happy. But the desire of happiness, or that inclination which continually prompts every man to seek after his own ease in the enjoyments of this life, will incite him to search out, and to comply with such remedies for his wants and necessities, as his own reason, exercised upon the present sensible objects that surround him, will be ready to suggest: and howsoever the establishment of society may contribute to provide and secure to us the enjoyment of such things as are immediately necessary to the preservation of our beings; yet the general wants, and necessities, and imperfections of the best regulated society or combination of men, associated for their mutual support, must still refer us to something superior to ourselves, on which we must depend for our ease and happiness: from hence it will arise, that according to the necessities of an individual separately considered, and the necessities or defects attending the establishment of societies, our imaginations will lead us to suppose some governing or superior Being or Beings, to whose power or wills we must apply for protection.

By this process of reasoning, grounded upon our own insufficiency, giving us continual notices that we are not independent, such conclusions concerning these
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superior and governing Beings will ensue, as are most suitable for encouraging our hopes, and allaying the fears, which the weakness and infirmities of our present state do expose us to : accordingly we may observe from the several provinces or employments assigned to the Gods of the Gentile world, that the wants and necessities of mankind, gave a necessary birth to suppositions of heathen divinities. Upon this principle, temples were built to a supreme God or Power of the air, necessary for maintaining animal life, to a God of the Sea, to a God of War, to a Goddess of Peace or Concord, to a God of Merchandize or traffic, and to a multitude of others from the like origine ; besides the numberless topical deities of particular regions and countries, all produced by the imaginations of men, reasoning from their own necessities, to the establishment of some protection or assistance for themselves, in all cases and circumstances of their distress.

The argument from this principle did appear so strong, that it had indeed the power of demonstration to prove the existence of these fictitious divinities, to the deluded imaginations even of those men, who were most esteemed for their wisdom in the heathen world : but if we will not allow that this principle of NECESSITY is a foundation to demonstrate that there is a Jupiter, a Mars, a Neptune, and a Mercury, which are, properly speaking, the Gods of Necessity, much less will it serve as a principle to demonstrate the Being and Attributes of the true God ; and yet no other can be found to uphold Dr. Clarke's Demonstration, after setting aside the information of Holy Writ, as he professes to do : whence it comes to pass in the course of his reasonings, that the wants, and infirmities, and necessities of our nature, CONSEQUENT to our fall and apostacy from God, the true cause of the ignorance and darkness of our understandings in our spiritual concerns, is by his management become a principle of ANTECEDENT NECESSITY, for demonstrating the Being and Perfections of God ; and by due process of his argument,

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gument, comes also to be the foundation of his NATURAL and REVEALED RELIGION. Therefore no wonder if these performances, when examined by the assistance of divine revelation, are found to correspond to the original cause or principle from whence they are derived, as being compounded of contradictions and blasphemy.

This SELF-EVIDENT principle of necessity in our own nature, unable to support itself, and conscious of having derived its being from some Power or Being superior to it, is the foundation upon which all the heathen deities were supported in the imaginations of men; upon which footing it becomes a self-evident proposition, that there is a God or Gods, a Being or Beings superior to man; and thus Dr. Clarke's proposition, that "Something has existed from all eternity," is admitted as a self-evident proposition, that is, through the consciousness of our own necessity and dependance, not from the self-sufficiency and strength of our understandings; accordingly in arguing by this principle, we may see from the history of mankind, that the consequences they inferred from it, in multiplying their Gods, and the phantastical objects of their worship in the days of idolatry, may be all duly accounted for, by considering the original cause from whence they came: whereas the consequence Dr. Clarke draws from his proposition, does not correspond to the principle whence it arose, but stands in direct opposition to it, implying that we are not to look for our support from any of the external visible objects of sense, to which the unassisted reason of mankind always did, and would still continue to apply for assistance; but his inference is to a contrary effect, "That Something has existed from all eternity," superior to all objects of sense "otherways the things that now are" (that is, all sensible objects) "must have risen out of nothing, absolutely and without cause;" which, as before observed, is taking for granted, that all material objects have been in time produced; which is the point in debate with his supposed adversary, whom he confutes by this assertion derived

rived from the assent we have given to that proposition of revealed truth, that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* So that Dr. Clarke has argued falsely in making an inference which does not proceed from the principle that afforded the proposition he sets out with for the foundation of his work; which is carried on also by assistance surreptitiously borrowed from Holy Scripture, denied and disguised by subtile terms of his art.

Our reason can proceed no farther in arguing towards the TRUTH, but by acknowledging this SELF-EVIDENT proposition, that we are NOT INDEPENDENT, and concluding from thence that there are some Beings superior to man; but here is its utmost limit; for among all the objects of sense which afford all the materials of our knowledge unimproved by divine aid, we can find no guide to conduct us to the true God; and therefore in conceiving from our own observations, of Powers or Beings superior to objects of sense; the fancy or imagination must take the lead, to supply, by our own inventions, what we stand in need of for our assistance: from hence every nation in the heathen world, had their divinities, and were all equally intitled to maintain and assert their existence, together with the worship and honour they thought due unto them.

From this observation concerning human reason, it appears that it can afford no weapon against an Atheist, because he acknowledges the utmost that reason can demand by agreeing to Dr. Clarke's proposition; but it follows yet farther, that properly speaking, there never was nor can be an Atheist; for no man, as the Dr. tells us by his own experience, can persuade himself that he is INDEPENDENT, or, as he has expressed it, after using the utmost endeavours for this purpose, he cannot banish from his mind some ideas, as of eternity and infinity, that is, he cannot avoid having consciousness of his own insufficiency, and therefore that some Being has existed prior and superior to him.

The Atheist truly described, is of another sort than one of those imaginary personages, against whom Dr. Clarke maintains his mock fight; he belongs to a very large class of men, who live in opposition to the revealed Will of God, of which they are well informed, yet continue to follow their own Wills in opposition to the Divine Will, hereby speaking out and declaring by their actions, that they disown their submission, and assert an independency by practical Atheism; which may, and usually does lead them on yet farther into an opposition, through their behaviour and discourses propagating infidelity, by using their endeavours to suppress, corrupt, and contradict what God has said.

The distemper of these men consists in making light of the authority of Holy Scripture, to establish some sort of religion, or rule of life, which they labour to persuade themselves may be certainly derived from their own reason, or the light of nature, independently of the revealed Will of God; therefore that we may contend successfully against these adversaries, we must assert and maintain the authority of Holy Writ, and so, denying the sufficiency of human reason, we must not enter into controversy with them, as if we were able by our own hands to beat down their opposition, *for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, such as our own experience or reason unassisted is able to supply, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* The Christian combatants are to make use of these weapons, following the Apostle's advice, who is earnestly solicitous that no part of them should be open to the assaults of the enemy, and therefore exhorts us his brethren, *to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, who are all in strict alliance*

hiance and combination with such men as oppose the truth, and make war against every good soldier of Jesus Christ : *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all taking the shield of faith, where-with ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication of the Spirit, and watching there-unto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints,* who are all of them in danger from the enemies of their salvation, and cannot withstand them without taking the whole armour of God, and these weapons of his Spirit; so that the cause of true Religion is betrayed, when it is delivered over to our own reason to decide upon the foundation and merit of it. For reason alone cannot lead us to the true God, or to the knowledge of his Will, but *he that cometh to God, must BELIEVE that he is*—what he has been pleased to reveal to us; and as our obedience due to him, does imply that his Will should be done, we cannot know his Will, or what things he requires us to do as his servants, without information from him concerning them; *but God hath revealed them unto us, by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God; for what man knoweth the things* (or thoughts of man) *but the spirit of man which is in him: even so the things* (or Thoughts or Will) *of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*—If we cannot discover the secret thoughts of man from external appearances of his person and countenance, much less surely can we know the thoughts of God by consideration of his works, which have a more remote and distant relation to their great Creator; yet this is the task of the Deist or Moralist, who labours with all his might to invalidate the authority of the word of God, by setting uppermost the decisions of his own

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reason,

Reason, or such conclusions as he infers from his situation among outward visible objects, as a natural religion, or perfect rule of life ; and is only contented to admit the testimony of Scripture, where it may be wrested to coincide with his own arbitrary determinations. If on this footing we join him, to set aside the divine authority of Holy Scripture, the interest of true religion is betrayed into his hands : we consent thereby to argue and to *walk by sight* ; to which Dr. Clarke having agreed, notwithstanding the parade and arrangement of his sophistical Demonstrations against Atheists, Deists, Fatalists, and the rest of that tribe, he is found to be one of the most useful and industrious friends their cause ever had upon earth.

S E C T. II.

ALTHOUGH every paragraph, in the series of arguments contained in Dr. Clarke's Demonstrations of the Being and Attributes of God, be liable to refutation ; and that like animadversions to those which have passed on such parts of his Reasonings as have been particularly examined, will occur also throughout the whole performance, if it be distinctly enquired into ; yet there may be little advantage in searching more minutely into the several contradictory and inconclusive assertions, that are to be met with in all other parts of this laborious undertaking ; it being sufficient, in confutation of his design, to shew that his principle is false ; the suppositions he has taken for granted, are not to be allowed ; and the reasonings built on his principle and suppositions are of course to be rejected.

The apparent purpose or intention of this treatise, is to exalt the reason of man into a self-sufficiency, or innate capacity, of discovering, with the certainty of demonstration, the Being of the true God and his perfections ; upon which discovery, as demonstratively esta-

established, he proceeds in his way to "demonstrate, " in the next place, the unalterable obligations of Natural Religion, and the truth and certainty of the " Christian Revelation."

Here again we must observe, that much prejudice will arise against any attempt for confuting the Reasonings of this author, which are speciously and most artfully alledged as works of his zeal and industry, brought in support and confirmation of true religion; and to silence all objections of Infidels, Deists, and Atheists, to the contrary. But besides this prejudice, arising in his favour from his professed regard to our most holy religion, another, very hard to be removed, is likely to be found in our own breasts, favouring that superiority and sufficiency of Reason, which this great pleader in its behalf has endeavoured to establish:

The method observed by Dr. Clarke, in conducting us to the knowledge and belief of Divine Revelation, proceeds upon this supposition, That the Reason of man, properly exercised and employed, would lead us by demonstrative arguments to the knowledge of God, and of his Will, concerning our whole moral conduct and behaviour, in all circumstances of this life; and, in consequence of this supposition, that the revealed Will of God, in approving itself to our Reason by the most refined precepts of morality, is therefore to be assented to as divine on this recommendation: that it is highly reasonable and becoming, that such instructions should come from God. Thus it is confidently asserted by Dr. Clarke and his friends, that our Religion **MUST BE REASONABLE**; and hence they conclude peremptorily, that by acting according to the Religion or Law of Reason or Nature, we **MUST BE** accepted in the sight of God. This being granted, they are contented to lead us into Christianity, by shewing their own works approved by it, from such quotations of the Gospel as may apparently be reconciled with their own opinions; not scrupling, at the same time, artfully to set aside and explode what they

deem to be unreasonable ; that is, whatsoever will not coincide with their decisions. Upon this model very many ambitious hands have been employed, in rearing up and supporting what they may be pleased to call the Christian Church.

But before we give our assent to what the Deists affirm, that our Religion must be reasonable, it is fit we should distinctly consider what suppositions are implied under this assertion, and what consequences must follow from it ; for although the terms are short, yet the proposition is very fruitful, and is also of that sort, which may be neither safely affirmed or denied ; and therefore requires strict attention, to examine and unfold what it infers.

The form of this proposition, That our Religion **MUST BE** Reasonable, appears to be presumptuous, as importing that the ways and methods of Divine Wisdom for reconciling and recovering mankind to a state of favour and acceptance with Almighty God, must be suited and made conformable to some certain rule or standard, which we conceive ourselves to be possessed of.

By this assertion our Reason is placed in the uppermost seat, to look down upon the counsels of God, to pronounce upon them as subject to such limitations as we judge they ought to be confined to ; and in case his ways are not according to our ways of reasoning, we are not accountable to him for disobedience, if we follow our own Reason to guide ourselves.

Again, if the rules of our duty, prescribed by the revealed will of God, are found to correspond with our Reasonings, and to be approved by us as conducive to the present welfare and happiness of mankind, altho' upon this supposition there were no reason for rejecting Divine Revelation, as being what we would have it to be, conformable to those ways and rules of action which we judge best and fittest for us to observe ; yet by this supposition, all distinction is removed between the dictates of our own Reason, and the light and instruction
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of the Holy Spirit: whence it might be easy to conclude, that what is revealed is nothing more than the suggestions of right Reason, such as the best improved human faculties might attain unto.

To this length Dr. Clarke and his followers have plainly arrived, by allowing the Gospel to be a republication of the Law of Reason, or of Nature, chiefly indeed for the benefit of the inattentive or inconsiderate persons of the world; such as are of the meanest capacities, who are not so well able, as he and others of like improved and refined understandings, to search out and apprehend the Demonstrations of the Being and Attributes of God, and to follow them through those inferences and conclusions, which, if properly observed, do naturally introduce and explain the whole system of revealed Religion. So that the Gospel is intended, according to these great masters of human reason, to be a sort of guard or security afforded to us, that we should not mistake or deviate from the Law of Nature, which if all men would be at the pains to examine diligently, and live according to it, there could be no objection against embracing also the Religion of Christ.

How well these opinions are received, and how fruitful they have been in propagating high conceits of our own reason and understandings, the great variety of moral treatises formed on this plan may serve to demonstrate. For the deistical moral writers lay their claim to authority by a sort of demonstration; and they dictate for the instruction of such persons as are not able of themselves to argue scientifically, and desire that their labours may be considered on a like footing with those of the mathematician, who, although he does not pretend to bring forth any truth in his science, which is not the genuine discovery of Reason, which is common to all men, may, notwithstanding, have a high title to merit for the demonstrative proof of such propositions, as others, unacquainted or little versed in that science, would never have thought of.

But

But this whole consequence cannot be better set forth than in Dr. Clarke's own words, page 133 of the *Demonstrations*, 5th Edit. 8vo. by *Knapton*.

“ From what has been said on this argument, we
 “ may see how it comes to pass, that though nothing
 “ is so certain and undeniable as the NECESSARY ex-
 “ istence of God, and the CONSEQUENT deduction of all
 “ his Attributes, yet men who have never attended to
 “ the evidence of Reason, and the notices that God
 “ has given us of himself, may easily be, in great mea-
 “ sure, ignorant of both. That the three angles of a
 “ triangle are equal to two right ones, is so certain
 “ and evident, that whoever affirms the contrary, af-
 “ firms what may very easily be reduced to an express
 “ contradiction : yet, whoever bends not his mind to
 “ consider it at all, may easily be ignorant of this, and
 “ numberless other the like mathematical and most in-
 “ fallible truths ;” which is an illustration surely very
 much to the purpose of his work.—

Further, the authority of holy Scripture is diminished, if not entirely set aside, by adhering to that proposition, That our Religion must be Reasonable ; for if we are instructed in the doctrines of Divine Revelation, and taught to receive them, because they are reasonable or decent, or suitable for a rational or moral being to be guided by them ; the weight of our obligation to live according to them, is laid upon that conformity they are allowed to have with our own apprehensions of our relation to God, and to one another, and to the external circumstances of our condition, respecting our situation in this present life. So that the divine commands are obligatory, provided that we think they should oblige us, as corresponding to our own experience, and agreeing to those conclusions we make by our own reasonings, concerning the suitability and fitness of things.

And although it may be deemed expedient, we should be educated and trained up in our childhood to profess and to believe in the doctrines of Christianity ; yet,
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when we come to know, by our own experience, that these doctrines are to be derived from our own reasonings upon the nature and fitness of things, the AUTHORITY of Holy Writ may seem no longer necessary to keep us under proper rules of action; for our own understandings, improved by human literature, and by conversation and knowledge of the world, may be judged equal to all the purposes of life. And as a further consequence of such opinions, it must unavoidably follow, that whatever discoveries are made to us by Divine Revelation, which we cannot deduce from those principles upon which our own reasonings do proceed, we cannot receive them, because, by the supposition, they are not reasonable; and especially if we think also they are not necessary to direct us in the present conduct of our lives.

But if these considerations are not sufficient to make us suspect there is fallacy in that proposition, by which the superiority of our Reason in deciding on the merit of our Religion is asserted; by attending to Dr. Clarke's arguments, we shall find still farther grounds to be aware of dangerous conclusions arising from it.

He begins his "Discourse concerning the unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation," with a short recapitulation of the principal propositions, which he conceives we will allow him to have demonstrated in his former discourse, by which he tells us, he had "endeavoured to lay FIRMLY the FIRST FOUNDATIONS of Religion, in the certainty of the existence and of the attributes of God."—From whence it is plainly insinuated, that the first foundations of religion were not firmly laid, until they were fixed by his hands; for he surely is no friend to the building who would move the first foundations of it, if they were firmly laid, that he might put other foundations in their place.

But it is yet farther insinuated, that after all the labour he has had, there may be still some doubting about

about his first foundations ; for he ventures to say no more, than that he has ENDEAVOURED to lay them firmly : so that although we must suppose he has done all that was possible to lay firmly the First Foundations of Religion, yet he means to hint it to us, that there may be still some defect in the ground on which they stand ; and of this we are very skilfully apprized, as he proceeds in recounting what he had done, “ by
 “ proving, severally and distinctly, that Something
 “ must have existed from all eternity ; and how great
 “ soever the difficulties are, which perplex the concep-
 “ tions and apprehensions we attempt to FRAME of an
 “ eternal duration ; yet they neither ought nor can
 “ raise in any man's mind any doubt or scruple con-
 “ cerning the truth of the assertion itself, that Some-
 “ thing has really been eternal.”

We will allow, that no man of a well-disposed mind will ever be perplexed with difficulties, by attempting to FRAME conceptions of an eternal duration ; such sort of FRAMING being an attempt fit only for the adventurous spirits of Dr. Clarke, and his self-sufficient disciples. But if these difficulties, as he says, “ nei-
 “ ther ought nor can raise in ANY man's mind any
 “ doubt or scruple,” he knew best himself why he should make any mention of them. However, we may reasonably suppose, that he meant, as usual, to set us upon trying the extent of our understandings in struggling with these difficulties, as if it were indeed desirable that they should be conquered, that his first foundations might be quite firm and clear ; but if they are unconquerable, as he seems to allow, then we have his WORD for it, that these difficulties neither OUGHT NOR CAN raise in any man's mind any doubt or scruple ; and so his own authority comes in to support his FIRST FOUNDATIONS, which is, no doubt, the very ground he desired to fix them upon.

After the discovery we have made, and our rejection of that imposture, on which he has built his Mock Demonstrations, our resentment may be justly moved at his
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his presumptuous discourse in summing up, with his peculiar self-confident address, what he says he had proved or demonstrated severally and distinctly ; from which distinct recapitulation, as we find it at the entrance of this other part of his work, he designed that we should conceive he had perfectly measured out, and founded, with his own line and plummet, the whole depth of that most awful subject of which he had been treating, and therefore was warranted to pronounce peremptorily upon it, that thus and thus IT MUST BE OF NECESSITY.

Fifteen propositions are set forth by him, the proof of which makes up the body of his ensuing work : but as he had in his foregoing treatise encountered all sorts of Atheists, before he enters upon the remaining part of his task, he describes the adversaries that he now proposes to deal with ; and of these he reckons up four sorts, under the title of Deists. Three sorts of them are of such a kind of men as he does not think worth while to bestow arguments upon them ; but the fourth sort, who are, as he says, " the only TRUE DEISTS, and indeed the only persons who ought in reason to be argued with," he has described by a character drawn at full length, and embellished with such peculiar marks of his sincere regard for them, that he very charitably could wish all his adversaries might be found in this class ; for then, " if they would at all attend to the consequences of their own principles, they could not fail of being quickly persuaded to embrace Christianity."

But perhaps we should not be mistaken, if we supposed that Dr. Clarke, in drawing up the character of these adversaries, the True Deists, so very favourably, had some design upon his friends to make them also fall in love with it ; since he represents this sort of Deists as agreeing perfectly to all those propositions he had formerly demonstrated, the substance of which he sets forth in short articles of their belief, and concludes

as if indeed the only cause he had to find fault with these True Deists was, that they did not believe in these articles as revealed, but merely as dictated by their own reason : " But all this, (says he) the men we " are now speaking of PRETEND TO BELIEVE only so " far as is discoverable by the light of Nature alone, " without believing any divine Revelation." So that by his representation of them, the difference between the TRUE DEISTS and Christians is little else than this, That the former pretend to believe all the chief and fundamental doctrines of religion, as discovered by their own Reason, or the light of Nature ; whereas the latter believe also the same doctrines, but on the authority of Divine Revelation : by which account the True Deist and Christian agreeing in the same things, there can be very little fear of this sort of Deist, if he attends to the consequences of his own principles, but that he must quickly become a true Christian. According to this sort of process, Dr. Clarke has undertaken to train up his disciples, first to make them TRUE DEISTS by his *Demonstrations*, and then, by a little more of his instruction, they must quickly come to be good Christians.

There is cause indeed to fear, that his writings have had such pernicious influence on many persons as to make them Deists, by inspiring high conceits of their own Reason, as absolutely sufficient for all the purposes of religion, and no ways standing in need of Divine Revelation ; but whatever success he has had in making Deists, or Atheists, or Moralists, for at present we need not mark the difference between them, it is sure, his method of institution will never lead his followers to Christianity. And of this we may discover a pregnant proof, by attending to the first proposition of this treatise, which is of the most enormous size, in pride of reasoning, that has appeared in the world, since the original apostacy of mankind, which by implication is abetted and defended by it.

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It is delivered in the following terms.

“ The same necessary and eternal different relations
 “ that different things bear one to another, and the
 “ same consequent fitness or unfitness of the applica-
 “ tion of different things or different relations one to
 “ another, with regard to which the Will of God al-
 “ ways and necessarily does determine itself, to chuse
 “ to act only what is agreeable to justice, equity, good-
 “ ness and truth, in order to the welfare of the whole
 “ universe, OUGHT LIKEWISE constantly to determine
 “ the wills of all subordinate rational beings, to go-
 “ vern all their actions by the same rules, for the good
 “ of the public, in their respective stations. That is,
 “ these eternal and necessary differences of things
 “ make it fit and reasonable for creatures so to act :
 “ THEY cause it to be their duty, or lay an obligation
 “ upon them so to do ; even separate from the consi-
 “ deration of those rules being the POSITIVE WILL or
 “ Command of God, and also antecedent to any respect
 “ or regard, expectation or apprehension, of any par-
 “ ticular private and personal advantage or disadvan-
 “ tage, reward or punishment, either present or future,
 “ annexed either by natural consequence, or by posi-
 “ tive appointment, to the practising or neglecting of
 “ those rules.”

The imposture of this presumptuous proposition, does depend on a long chain of false reasoning concerning the Will of God, which Dr. Clarke does suppose his demonstrations have established in the foregoing treatise ; but it has been already remarked, in consequence of this proposition of revealed truth, that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,*— (the substance of which Dr. Clarke falsely introduces into his work, as discovered by human reason, which never did nor could attain to it): there is not any fitness or unfitness of things, nor any different relations of different things antecedent to his Will who is the Author of all things ; it being evidently a contradiction to suppose that differences or relations of things should subsist, indepen-

dependently of his Will who created all things ; and if they are not independent of his Will, they cannot be antecedent to it : but, as in his former treatise he advanced an atheistical proposition, " That Something " had existed from all eternity," on which he built his demonstrations of the being and attributes of God, after taking the account of them surreptitiously from Holy Writ ; so in this treatise concerning Religion, he builds upon another atheistical proposition, as derived from his demonstrations, introducing a fitness in things antecedent to the Will of God, as SOMETHING NECESSARY to determine the Will of God, and the Wills of all rational subordinate Beings.

It must needs require the utmost stretch of our understandings to attempt to FRAME an apprehension of fitnesses of things, and eternal different relations of different things, antecedent or prior to the Will of God, who created all things ; for this monstrous assertion can mean nothing less than a new creation of eternal differences and relations, arising from the things themselves which were created ; from which sort of new creation, as not foreseen by God in the beginning, and therefore independent of him, those consequent eternal fitnesses and relations are produced, from the knowledge of which, this blasphemous proposition affirms the Will of God does NECESSARILY CHUSE to determine itself. Such impious contradictions do arise upon examining into this imposture, as almost to escape expression suitable to the foulness and malignity of their nature, unable to bear the light of discovery.

Such were the high and distempered conceits which possessed the imagination of the parent of mankind, wrought upon by the false suggestions of the enemy, when, by believing his lie, she conceived from it an apprehension of some goodness or fitness to increase or compleat her happiness in the forbidden object of desire, as being in that fruit independent or antecedent to the Will of God, who had commanded that it should not be eaten ; for to this purpose the tempter spoke,
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in contradiction to the WORD of GOD, *Ye shall not surely die*; — and then follows the evil insinuation of the deceiver, *for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil*; that is, he knows there is some goodness or fitness in that fruit to make you wise and happy, which benefit you will immediately receive on eating it, though forbidden by him, who would deny you thereby greater blessings than you have at present; and the woman, judging by her sight, consented to this lye, such goodness or fitness appearing *when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the EYES, and a tree to be desired to make one wise*; she then committed the act of rebellion, which act is abetted and defended by the proposition, which rests upon this supposition, that “ what these relations of
 “ things ABSOLUTELY AND NECESSARILY ARE IN
 “ THEMSELVES, THAT ALSO THEY APPEAR TO BE
 “ TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF ALL INTELLIGENT BE-
 “ INGS.” And therefore “ the same consequent fit-
 “ ness or unfitness of the application of different things,
 “ or different relations, one to another, with regard
 “ to which the Will of God always and necessarily
 “ does determine itself to chuse to act only what is
 “ agreeable to justice, equity, goodness, and truth, in
 “ order to the welfare of the whole universe, OUGHT
 “ likewise constantly to determine the Wills of all sub-
 “ ordinate rational beings, to govern all their actions
 “ by the same rules for the good of the public, in
 “ their respective stations.”—And then follows the
 highest inflamed conceit, in an extravagant strain of
 blasphemous impiety, or rather of enthusiastic mad-
 ness: “ That is, these eternal and necessary differences
 “ of things make it fit and reasonable for creatures so
 “ to act, THEY cause IT to be their duty, or lay an
 “ OBLIGATION upon them so to do, EVEN separate from
 “ the consideration of these rules being the POSITIVE
 “ WILL or command of GOD, and also ANTECEDENT
 “ to any RESPECT OR REGARD, expectation or appre-
 “ hension

“hension of any particular private and personal advantage or disadvantage, reward or punishment, either present or future, annexed either by natural consequence, or by POSITIVE appointment, to the practising or neglecting these rules.”

But the argument for exciting us to this ambition of acting independently, is not from the invention of Dr. Clarke, any more than the antecedent fitness or unfitness of things; for it came from him who *is a liar, and the father of it*; being nothing else than the telling us by other words, but in terms very explicit and significant, *Ye shall be as Gods*, or Deists.—Let those who are fond of this title, remember from whose authority it is originally derived.

That the appearance of demonstration may be carried on throughout the course of this performance, we are told, that “the several parts of this proposition may be proved distinctly in the following manner:” and as he looked upon it, no doubt, as of the highest importance to establish it firmly, we have a very long and elaborate proof, suitable to the proposition to be proved, being made up of terms either ambiguous or contradictory, or of uncertain signification, with a declamatory shew of reasoning, joined to peremptory assertions, supported on false suppositions, making up a FRAME of imposture, complicated with as much art as this master-workman was able to devise.

It would be a task indeed of great compass, to bring out severally into light all the subtle insinuations which constitute this proof, the whole abyss of fallshood being opened for its service: but it may be requisite, to shew the tendency of this design, that we should make some animadversions on the principal parts of which it is composed.

In order to prove that there are eternal and necessary differences of things, he advances,

“That there are differences of things, and different relations, respects, or proportions, of some things towards others, is as evident and undeniable, as that
“one

“one magnitude or number is greater, equal to, or smaller than another; that from these different relations of different things, there necessarily arises an agreement or disagreement of some things with others, or a fitness or unfitness of the application of different things or different relations one to another, is likewise as plain, as that there is any such thing as proportion or disproportion in geometry or arithmetick, or uniformity or difformity in comparing together the respective figures of bodies, &c.”

It is not easy to give any precise answer to this sort of argument, as the author did not mean to affirm any thing clearly by it, but only in general to amuse our understandings, as if he had produced something that proved his proposition.

However, there is a meaning in these strange terms of his art, but such as he would not chuse plainly to speak out: that is, from the different impressions received by our senses from outward visible objects, he desires we should conclude, that there are eternal, unalterable, and necessary differences in these objects, according to the diversity of our sensations, by which we should in all cases be directed in our way and manner of life; or, in other words, as he expresses it, that we should take things to be WHAT THEY APPEAR TO BE, and act accordingly, which is, in effect, the old proposition over again abetted, that we should *walk by sight*.

2. To prove that the Will of God always determines itself to act according to the eternal reason of things, he affirms, “What these eternal and unalterable relations, respects, or proportions of things, with their consequent agreements or disagreements, fitnesses or unfitnesses, absolutely and necessarily are in themselves, THAT ALSO THEY APPEAR TO BE TO THE understandings of all intelligent beings, except, &c.”

These words have been already quoted from another place in his preceding treatise, and surely they require

but little attention to perceive the imposture he would pass upon us by their means.

It is hard indeed to suppose what these Fittests and Unfittests are, which are absolutely and necessarily in the things themselves; for if we are to understand by them their sensible qualities, the shape, colour, taste, or smell of material objects; it is not suitable to the reasonings of the philosopher, to say that these are absolutely in the things themselves.

Again, if by these differences or fittests are meant the internal constitution or texture of the minute parts or particles of bodies, on which their sensible qualities depend; as our senses do not inform us of these differences, what they are absolutely and necessarily in the things themselves, That they cannot appear to be to our understandings. But there was no other method to prove the understandings of God and man to be on a level, in acting upon the same principle, but by getting over the difficulty of FRAMING and AFFIRMING what he would have us to BELIEVE.

However, if we were to take this principle upon his authority, he has thought fit to give us a caution along with it, that must abate our security in living according to it; for he ventures to affirm no more, concerning the sufficiency of it for our direction, but that what these eternal and unalterable relations, &c. necessarily and absolutely are in themselves, "THAT also they APPEAR TO BE to the understandings of all intelligent beings, except those only who understand things to BE what they are not; that is, whose understandings are either very imperfect, or very much depraved; and by THIS understanding or knowledge of the natural and necessary relations, fittests, and proportions of things, the Wills likewise of all intelligent Beings are constantly directed, and MUST NEEDS be determined to act accordingly, excepting those only who WILL things to be what they are not, and cannot be; that is, whose Wills are corrupted by particular interest or affection, or swayed by some
" unrea-

“unreasonable and prevailing passion:” and if this be the condition of all mankind in a greater or less degree corrupted; then, by his own supposition, we are not likely to live according to the fitness of things, and what then becomes of his labour in FRAMING out this principle? but it is sure, as before observed, that he meant these exceptions should extend only to the lower class of mankind, who were never like to be trained up in the course of his demonstrations.

The point to be proved under this article of his argumentative process is, that the Will of God always determines itself according to the eternal reason of things, and this he infers in short terms, as a consequence from his foregoing assertion; “That what these fitnesses, &c. are in themselves, that they appear to be also to the understandings of ALL intelligent Beings, except, &c. Wherefore since the natural attributes of God, his infinite knowledge, wisdom, and power, set him infinitely above all possibility of being deceived by any error, or of being influenced by any WRONG AFFECTION, 'tis manifest his divine Will cannot but always and NECESSARILY determine TO CHOOSE to do what in the whole is absolutely best and fittest to be done; that is, to act constantly according to the eternal rules of infinite goodness, justice, and truth, as I have endeavoured to shew, &c.

They who have due respect for the sacred stile of scripture, informing us of the power and majesty of God, may be alarmed with just resentment at this presumptuous language, circumscribing his Will by such limits as the perverse Wills of his sinful creatures are bounded, and teaching that his acts result from a NECESSARY CHOICE; an expression equally blasphemous and contradictory, disguised however by his wonted address, covering up the foulness of the imposture, by the terms of infinite goodness, justice, and truth, which have no other signification here but to denote that his actions agree to the fitness of things; that is, over again, to

the same rule, by which he asserts that our Wills are, or ought to be governed.

The next article of his proof is a very long one, to shew "That all rational creatures" are obliged to govern themselves in all their actions by the same eternal rule of reason; but the substance of his argument to this purpose is no more than a repetition of what he had before advanced, that forasmuch as "the Will of God always and necessarily does determine itself to act in constant conformity to the eternal rules of justice, equity, goodness, and truth," that is, according to the fitness, or, as he now calls it, the reason, or the eternal reason of things; "this OUGHT also constantly to determine the Wills of all subordinate rational Beings to govern all their actions by the same rules;"—and his REASON is, because it is very "UNREASONABLE and BLAME-WORTHY IN PRACTICE" to do otherways:—which contains the whole force of his argument under this head of his proof.

To make out the Law of Nature as arising from the fitness of things, he appeals to the authorities of Plato, and his master Socrates, to various quotations from Cicero, who cites also the authority of Pythagoras; and lastly to that excellent author Arrian.

In answer to these authorities, we shall be ready to acknowledge the praise due to those excellent men, who made the best use of their reason for the instruction and improvement of mankind in those dark ages in which they lived; and their praise should not be the less, altho' it might be incontestably proved, that rays of divine light from the oracles of God, were derived to the heathen world by means of the Jewish people who were dispersed among them; and from thence a fair account might be given of the most refined precepts of the ancient moralists, who were excusable in not owning the authority of divine revelation from whence they were enlightened; but their praise is unseemly in the mouths of Dr. Clarke, and the moralizing philosophers

of the present times, who feign their own characters a-kin, but yet far superior to those admired persons of antiquity, for they pretend in these days from their own sufficiency to refine upon their precepts, and produce what they have learned from the hidden wisdom of God, as the fruit of their own reasonings; by which they endeavour to supersede the authority of the gospel of Christ.

This attempt does explain in the highest and most proper sense the meaning of that parable of our Saviour, setting forth the conspiracy of the husbandmen against the heir of their Lord, when they reasoned among themselves to this purpose, *Come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours*;—for the separation of his spirit from *the church which is his body*, by destroying his authority in it, is a more direct opposition to the power of his life, and to the honour of his birth-right, than the separation of his soul and body by a temporal death; and the inheritance of his wisdom is a much higher temptation to an ambitious spirit, than the temporal profits of his vineyard.

It would be to little purpose to have any regard to Dr. Clarke's disputations with Mr. Hobbs, over whom he meant to triumph in the superiority of his reason, through a long course of arguments superadded to the proof of his proposition; but howsoever this contest may be decided between them, which may be of small consequence, there is cause to suspect that Mr. Hobbs was the more ingenuous person of the two.

The last paragraph I shall quote from this performance of Dr. Clarke, explains the motive which engaged him to prove his first proposition with so many arguments, as might not leave any doubt or suspicion on our minds of its being fully established or demonstrated; and to shew how very confident he was of having succeeded in this most important article of his design, we find an asseveration by his own authority, uttered with as much boldness as if indeed he had a right to command our assent, with something more than the

evidence of mathematical certainty, for thus he concludes his elaborate proof.

“ I have been the longer upon this head, because
 “ MORAL VIRTUE is the foundation and the sum, the
 “ essence and the life of all true religion : for the se-
 “ curity whereof, all positive institution was principally
 “ designed, for the restoration whereof, all revealed re-
 “ ligion was ultimately intended, and inconsistent
 “ wherewith, or in opposition to which all doctrines
 “ whatsoever, supported by what pretence of reason
 “ or authority soever, are as certainly and necessarily
 “ false, as God is true.”

We are not now to wonder at this peremptory and violent assertion, which is no more indeed than a just consequence of his foregoing proposition, which he means by the full weight of his own authority firmly to establish, giving us his WORD as equivalent to the terms of the mathematician on finishing his work *Q. E. D.* which was to be demonstrated. For the present, it may suffice to reply to him in the words of St. Paul, *Yea let God be true, but every man (or moralist) a liar*, who sets up for authority, in the self-sufficiency of his own understanding.

After considering Dr. Clarke's endeavours for establishing the fitness of things as a common principle for directing the actions of God and man, and observing that his arguments to this purpose are false and blasphemous, it remains to be examined, what is this fitness of things, or these different relations of different things, which according to his reasoning, ought to have such powerful influence in maintaining the good order and government of the world : for it is to be observed that he has gone no farther in making us acquainted with this principle, but by giving us very positive assurances, that there is such a thing as fitness and unfitness, &c. which he says is “ as manifest, as that the
 “ properties which flow from the essences of different
 “ mathematical figures, have different CONGRUITIES
 “ OR INCONGRUITIES between themselves.”

In regard to all comparisons of this sort, it has been already answered, that as the evidence of mathematical certainty depends upon the testimony of our senses, the same degree of evidence cannot be had in those propositions of which we cannot judge by our senses; and therefore unless he would establish a mathematical or mechanical Religion, in which we are to be guided altogether by attending to the external objects of our senses, no demonstration can be had for our direction in Religion arising from the fitness and unfitness of things; and so it will be found on due examination, that this Natural Religion, which Dr. Clarke would persuade us, does coincide with Revealed Religion, is in fact nothing else but a mechanical art of living by the fitness of things, to please and gratify our senses in pursuit of that happiness which this world does afford; and is therefore a sort of Religion very different from the Religion of Christ.

In our way to this discovery it comes first to be enquired, upon what account he has ventured to assert, that the Will of God is governed by attending to the fitness of things.

A religious life does arise from a conformity of our actions, guided according to the Will of God: a Natural Religion is supposed to be independent of divine revelation, and therefore the Will of God must be supposed to be made known to us by his works, otherwise we can have no Religion of Nature. But an absolute certainty we cannot have that we shall be approved of God, in living according to the law of nature, without a farther supposition, that his Will is necessarily determined by the fitness of things, and qualifications of persons; and then we have this important conclusion for the support of Natural Religion, "That it is a thing evidently, and infinitely more fit, that any one particular innocent and good Being, should, by the Supreme Ruler and Disposer of all things, be placed and preserved in an easy and happy estate, than that without any fault or demerit of its own"

"own" (that is, as before observed, on supposition of its having acted according to the fitness of things) "it should be made extremely, remedilessly, and endlesly miserable."——So that if our actions correspond to the fitness of things, the supreme and governing principle, according to Dr. Clarke's arguments, we have the utmost certainty of obtaining our happiness, which is the end of true Religion.

By these suppositions he has FRAMED a SANCTION for the law of nature, giving it an authority superior and prior to the sanctions of Revealed Religion; which he has asserted, by maintaining this fitness of things as antecedent to all law, and "all positive and arbitrary appointment whatsoever;" that is, to any declaration God has made, or could make, of his WILL to any of his rational creatures.

There have been many occasions to observe in regard to Dr. Clarke's reasonings, that they are admirably calculated to strain our understandings to the utmost extent, for conceiving and FRAMING ideas suitable to the purposes of his undertaking; and no wonder if we are now called upon, to exert the whole force of our imagination, to raise up our faculties to that sublime pitch of comprehension, which is needful to establish this principle of the FITNESS of THINGS, as the very utmost limit of perfection in his work.

In answer to his attempts for this purpose, it has been already replied, That to suppose fitnesses of things or relations, antecedent to the Will of God, who created all things, does imply a contradiction, and all his arguments to establish this principle, tend only to amuse and baffle our understandings, by urging them to receive and to FRAME a lye.

But as we cannot be secure against the delusions of false reasoning, if left to the weakness of our own understandings, to guide us in our spiritual concerns, we are provided, through the mercy of God, with that light and information by his holy word, which, if we faithfully attend to it, will give ease to our minds, as
resting

resting upon the truth, and will set us free from all cheats and impostures of the deceiver.

Thus, in regard to the Will of God, we are taught by his word, that he only is free in and of himself, and *both done whatsoever pleased him*: and again, *known unto God are all his ways from the BEGINNING*; and *In the BEGINNING God created the heaven and the earth*. So that no consequent fitness or unfitness of things can happen to alter the purposes and determinations of his Will: therefore this principle of the fitness and unfitness of things, directing or determining the Will of God, is a false conceit, suggested or invented through a presumptuous attempt to enter into his counsels, to ascertain and limit, by our narrow apprehensions, the extent and depth of his wisdom, and to abridge his power by setting bounds to his actions, in like manner as it is said, our actions ought to be guided by that imaginary principle.

The occasion or temptation of framing this principle does arise from our inability of discerning the continual and immediate dependance of all things upon the spiritual and invisible power of God; because in our view of material visible objects, they are apparently distinguished and separated from each other, we are tempted to conclude that they may be also independent of that Power by which they were created, and that differences and relations among them may arise from this independence, by which the Will of God may be also consequently determined, as Dr. Clarke has expressed it in his reasonings: but this false reasoning, which began through the weakness of our understandings, is clearly removed by attending to the word of God, declaring, that *by him all things consist, as upholding all things by the word of his power*: the creation and preservation of all things being one continued act, of which no other cause is to be assigned, but his Will expressed *by the word of his power*.

Having shewn that the fitness of things, alledged as a principle directing the Will of God, is an invention

tion to supply a sanction for the law of nature, and to lay an obligation on us to walk according to that rule; we come now to consider what these differences, relations, or fitnesses are, by which our Wills ought to be determined according to the arguments of Dr. Clarke.

It has been already observed and repeated, that he has not told us what we are to understand by fitnesses, &c. and good reason there was only to affirm *SUCH A THING*, without shewing or discovering what it is; for as the principle is the work of imagination in framing, every man's imagination must be set to work, and that is done by a confident assertion of *SOMETHING*, the idea of which is left to us at large to frame out.

But although the principle is false, and of course to be rejected, yet there is a real cause or temptation for every man to live according to it, as our senses do continually inform us from the knowledge of *GOOD* and *EVIL*, which we receive by them, that there are relations, and differences, and fitnesses of things, by which we are to be guided in pursuing the happiness of this mortal life: so that the pleasures and pains arising from outward visible objects affecting our senses, or the organs of our bodies, are recommended to our consideration by the fitness of things, as proper measures for our direction in ordering the course and the manners of our lives.

All the actions of mankind proceed upon this principle in pursuit of their happiness in this present state, whether they are considered as individuals, or in collective bodies, as members of a community, united for mutual preservation and defence in the enjoyment of those advantages to which they are intitled by the order of society. With regard to an individual, the compass of action on this principle is of small extent; for if a man were to live without having intercourse or connections with others of like nature with himself, his employment could differ very little from brute animals, who are chiefly intent and busied with their food; but our compass of action is enlarged by connections in
society,

society, and the more perfect and completely regulated that society is to which we belong, the greater variety of action is required to support and preserve its state, which is then allowed to be most sound and stable, when every member of it may enjoy securely his portion of sensual entertainments, being precluded from invading what belongs to another: so that the aim of society, subsisting by the law of nature, distinguished from divine revelation, and founded on the fitness of things, is to procure for us, as sociable creatures, the greatest comforts or advantages which this world affords; that is, to please and gratify our senses in security, while we continue in it, as the ultimate view or end of its establishment: the whole compass of morality formed on the law of nature falls within this design, as consisting in the exercise of those duties we owe to one another, for promoting our mutual ease or happiness in the comforts of this world. But the design of revealed Religion in the gospel of Christ, is not to fix our hearts and our attention upon the happiness of this life, and therefore we must contradict Dr. Clarke in his very confident and solemn assertion, by affirming to the contrary, that MORAL VIRTUE is not the foundation and the sum, the essence and the life of all true Religion, and that it was not for the restoration thereof all revealed Religion was ultimately intended.

The consequence of attending to this principle, by the fitness of things to please and gratify our senses, and avoid those evils which give us pain and uneasiness in our bodies, may be easily seen, both in regard to the natural or human body in particular, or in general to the artificial and collective bodies of men united in society: with respect to the former, we cannot live by the fitness of things in sensual enjoyments without continual wasting and decay in our bodies, which are therefore soon corrupted and worn out, and fall into dust; and with regard to the latter composition in society, the SANCTIONS of the laws, the bands by which it is connected,

nected, being derived from the pleasures and pains of sense, through the weakness of this principle it has never yet been effectual to preserve the union which is necessary to the life or well-being of society, without continual approaches towards its dissolution, which has been long since effected of the greatest monarchies that have successively governed the world, and is the true reason also why those governments, which do at present subsist, are varying and perishing in their FORMS.

Hence we must conclude, that the fitness of things is not to be approved as a principle of life, but is a principle tending unto death, which has its evil influence over us, by our deceitful imaginations laying hold upon it as a guide to our happiness, in disobedience to the Will of God made known to us by his word, which is the true principle of life. It remains only to be observed, that the argument of the goodness, fitness, or suitableness of things, being antecedent to all laws, as Dr. Clarke has expressed it, will prove the correspondence or coincidence of his principles of antecedent necessity, and consequent eternal fitnesses of things, both of them being derived from the original corruption of our nature, by apostacy from our Creator, which has been already shewn concerning the former principle of antecedent necessity, and is true also of the other; inasmuch as the reason of making laws has arisen from the EVIL passions and dispositions of men, which must be restrained and corrected, and the practice of moral virtue encouraged by rewards and punishments, to preserve the peace and order of society. But if the corruption of mankind were removed, the NECESSITY of all human laws would be at an end, and the praise of men for justice, or mercy, or truth, would cease also; that is, the happiness of the world would arise from the conformity of our Wills in obedience to the Divine Will, the universal law of wisdom, righteousness, and truth, by which every man would have praise, not of men, but of God: so that the inference of Dr. Clarke is blasphemous, which concludes

cludes, "As this Law of Nature (or Moral Law) is
"infinitely superior to all authority of men, and in-
"dependent upon it," (because the REASON OR NE-
CESSITY of it, through the corruption of their nature,
is prior to the laws of human society) "so its obliga-
"tion primarily and originally is antecedent also to
"this consideration of its being the POSITIVE Will or
"Command of God himself;" (an assertion which re-
fers us to derive our obligation of obedience to the
to the Divine Will, primarily and originally from our
defection and apostacy from it); and this he proves in
his usual style and method. "For as the addition of
"certain numbers necessarily produce a certain sum;
"and certain geometrical or mechanical operations
"give a constant and unalterable solution of certain
"problems or propositions; so in moral matters there
"are certain necessary and unalterable respects or re-
"lations of things, which have not their original from
"ARBITRARY and POSITIVE constitution, but are of
"ETERNAL NECESSITY in their own nature. For ex-
"ample, &c."—with more to the like purpose, which
is such sort of presumptuous and impertinent amuse-
ment, as deserves no other answer but a short one,
which need not here be repeated. However, for his
support in this matter, he appeals to the authority of
another writer, to whom it appears he was indebted
for several of the terms of his art, and the method of
his arguments.

Upon due consideration of these attempts, under the
light of the Gospel to establish a Law of Nature, inde-
pendent of it, by an invasion of the sacred truth, falsely
and surreptitiously appropriated as the fruit of our own
understandings, we may be warranted to pronounce
upon them, that they encourage and abet mankind in
their natural corruption and degeneracy, by giving
them ease in following their own wills, without respect
to the Will of God, and thereby fixing their attention
on this life only, in opposition to the grace and mercy
of

of God, vouchsafed to us in the Gospel of Christ ; that all such designs being highly injurious to the honour of God, and happiness of mankind, do therefore justly deserve our resentment and abhorrence.

As the performances of Dr. Clarke, now examined, are the most eminent in this kind, by a specious pretence of certainty and demonstration, and by direct and open violence committed on the most sacred and most awful Truth of Revelation, concerning the Divine Being and his Perfections, they are not other ways to be regarded, than as an heinous offence against the Majesty of God, and the most dangerous and unpardonable insult that could be offered to the understandings of men, tending to betray them into strong-holds of self-confidence in their own reasonings to be separated and shut up from the approaches of sacred Truth.

The over-rated esteem of mathematicians, and of mathematical learning, which prevailed at that time when Dr. Clarke's Demonstrations appeared, afforded the most favourable opportunity for obtruding his confident and most detestable imposture of spurious birth, for the legitimate issue of that science.

S E C T. III.

SINCE it appears from the foregoing arguments, that we cannot discover the first and fundamental truth of Religion by our own experience in conversing with objects of sense ; neither attain to happiness by sensual gratifications ; and that if we follow our own Reason, unassisted by Divine Revelation, we shall always continue to *walk by sight* ; and we likewise have observed, that the example or instructions of others, assisting our experience by their observations, exclusive of divine aid, must, in like manner, betray us to live according to that false and deceitful rule of life ; it now remains to be considered how we may escape from this corrupt principle, which we ought to forsake,

forfake, and by what means we shall be enabled to fix our happiness on a sure foundation. This is done according to the Christian course of life, when (as the Apostle tells us) *we walk by Faith, not by Sight*.

To prove this, we must examine into these two particulars :

First, How the evil principle was introduced ; or whence it arises, that mankind of themselves should be always inclined to *walk by Sight*.

Secondly, By what means that corrupt principle is destroyed ; or what that course of life is, which the Apostle, as the follower of Christ, made choice of, when he says, *We walk by Faith, not by Sight*.

First, to shew how the evil principle was introduced ; or whence it arises, that mankind of themselves should be always inclined to *walk by Sight*.

In those ages of the world, when the oracles of God were committed to the Jews, distinguished from the rest of mankind chiefly by this peculiar advantage, we are not to wonder at the great variety of opinions maintained by curious and inquisitive persons, concerning the formation and government of the world.

It does now afford matter of entertainment to learned men surveying these opinions, to observe in what manner the wise men among the heathens adventured, by their conjectures, to satisfy themselves and their followers, how the world was made, and the parts of it disposed in the wonderful order and agreement which we perceive among them. We who are now better instructed, find no difficulty in rejecting the opinions of Pythagoras, or Plato, or Aristotle, or of any other leader in the ages of paganism, concerning this subject ; our minds are at perfect ease about it, and the full discovery of the truth, with its proper authority, has silenced all disputes of this kind ; so that we are as little disposed to believe the earth was originally formed or constituted as some of those philosophers imagined, as

to take their account of its being governed by Jupiter, or any other of their fabulous divinities.

It is not to be doubted that the inspired or Mosaic account of the creation was discovered to the heathen nations by the Jews, who were dispersed among them; and it might seem strange, that those men, whose names were most famous for their diligent searches after knowledge, should not, upon hearing it, readily embrace and acquiesce in the truth. But, to account for their rejecting it, we must consider, that they supposed God, who was spoken of by Moses, to have been only the God of the Jews; for if the philosophers had confessed, that the God of the Jews was the Creator of all things, as the Sacred Historian relates, this confession would, by due course of reasoning, have led them to ascribe all power unto him, and thereby have set aside the whole system of Pagan Theology. This was the very argument St. Paul made use of for this purpose, in his discourse to the men of Athens, placing the first and fundamental truth of Revealed Religion, as the ground and foundation of his reasoning with them, *God that made the world and all things therein, &c. Acts xvii. 24.*

But it came to pass, through their prepossession by former prejudices against the truth, that although several of the wise men we speak of were instructed by Jewish tradition from the sacred records, yet none of these philosophers kept the doctrines pure as they received them, but always mixed and blended them with errors of human invention: for the truth came to them without its authority conveyed along with it, and so their minds continued unsettled and doubtful, and therefore apt to indulge themselves in conceits from their own imaginations.

It remained for the happy ages of the Gospel Revelation, to unite all nations, who have been blessed with its light, in belief, that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*; and that we have the comfort with St. Paul to make answer to that important question,

tion, *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also.*

This great fundamental truth, that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, is, and ought so to be called, The LIGHT of NATURE.

The meaning of this expression, the LIGHT of NATURE, in the writings of the Moralists or Deists, contending for a Law of Nature, independent of Divine Revelation, does indeed correspond with the signification of it, when applied to this first great truth of holy writ, but with this essential difference, that they understand by it such internal light, or capacity of reasoning in the mind of man, exercised upon ideas received from sensible objects, as to be able, by its own strength, to establish that truth, and lay it the foundation of all their moral discoveries; so that the contest between the Believers and the Deists is not, Whether there is a Light of Nature, and a Law consequent upon it; but whether the first principle was given by God, or whether we can arrive to it of ourselves, and walk thereby without his authority to deliver and confirm us in the belief of it.

The trial was made in the Gentile world through all the ages of Paganism; and we know, from the history of mankind, that no nation, nor any philosopher that we have an account of, did hold that truth as it was delivered to the Jews; and they who had received it by tradition from them, always made corrupt additions to it: so that if we who do believe in the truth, as it is conveyed to us by Divine Revelation, are now contented to admit, that the philosophers of the Gospel age should be able to give us a Law of Nature consonant to Divine Revelation, without the help of it, we do thereby acknowledge,

First, That they are able to perform what has been found by experience to have been impracticable in all ages preceding the Gospel, by the most inquisitive and diligent searchers after knowledge in the heathen world.

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Secondly,

Secondly, That although the Moralists of the latter days enjoy the benefit of Revelation, yet, that they are not profited by it; for if they have received from thence any assistance in their moral compositions, they have not shewn us the Laws of Nature in the sense they propose them to us.

Thirdly, That the approbation they look for by our consent, given to the Law of Nature which they seek to establish, does arise from our internal light, or capacity of reasoning, without allowing that our reason is improved by instruction from revealed truth, altho', in these days, no Law of Nature does meet with any general approbation, which is not conformable to the Word of God.

Hence it is, that the subtlety of this attempt of the enemy of true religion, for establishing a Law of Nature, under the light of the Gospel, does consist in separating the Authority of God from his Word, that so it may be received as the word of men, and not as the Word of God; which is a design of such high importance to the enemies of the Truth, that St. Paul, with particular regard to this attempt, informs the Thessalonians, *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe* its divine authority, without which it cannot work effectually.

In regard to the generality of men, who have the sacred book of God put into their hands, the evidence they are capable of receiving, in attestation of its divine authority, arises from the universal consent which has been, as they are told, and is now given to the truth contained in it, being inspired or conveyed into the minds of those men who wrote it from the Holy Spirit of God.

It does not usually fall in the way of persons unacquainted with human learning, to meet with arguments for invalidating the authority of the Holy Scriptures; but

but they are in danger of being misled into disregard of the Sacred Writings, by the examples of other men, whom they suppose more perfectly acquainted with the reasons upon which the Bible has been allowed of divine original; whence a strong prejudice or offence may arise in regard to its authority, if violated; for since it is believed to be sacred from universal consent, a profane example from any person who appears to be sober and considerate, has a dangerous tendency to destroy this argument; and although various and deep designs have been laid to diminish or set aside the evidence of Divine Revelation in the Sacred Records, yet, if the examples of evil men, living in opposition to them, were removed, there is no danger from any other arguments to that purpose, that can be offered to an ingenuous mind.

Under this sanction of general assent to their divine authority, the holy writings are delivered into our hands; and from this external recommendation, our attention is required to what they contain.

On opening the sacred volume we are presented with the first great truth, the LIGHT OF NATURE to the moral world, which no other but a Divine Historian could bring forth, that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* The books of Moses are certainly more ancient than any heathen composition that has descended to us; so that the first great principle of wisdom stands foremost also in the records of time.

All the diligent searches, and various conjectures of the heathen wise men, concerning the origin of the universe, and the formation of the world, are to be considered as so many earnest attempts and reachings of the human mind, to gain and possess this important truth; we see with how little success they wandered in their approaches towards this arduous discovery; and such of them as heard the truth from the Jews, were not able to receive and retain it with that ease and acquiescence of mind, with which it is now believed and entertained by us in the Christian age. Some assistance

was necessary to prepare our understandings for embracing the truth when proposed to us, which was not vouchsafed to the Gentile world, until the Sun of Righteousness arose upon it.

It has been observed by a writer of great discernment in the propriety of expression in human compositions, that Moses has described the work of creation, as performed in a manner suitable to the Majesty of the Almighty Artificer ; but although to him who considered this description in no other light than as the effort of mere human sagacity and invention, it might occasion only surprize and admiration at his language who delivered it ; yet to us, who believe in the divine authority by which it is written, an internal evidence arises, conspiring to make us apprehend worthily of his infinite wisdom and power by whom all things were made, and that he only who created the light, could command it to be written, *Let there be light, and there was light.*

The inspired account of the creation being confined chiefly to what concerned the habitation of man, after the elements were separated, and the earth was in fit cloathing, prepared to sustain its future inhabitants, the sacred writer proceeds to inform us, *God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven ; and God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind ; and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth : and the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind ; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind ; and God saw that it was good.*

After

After the formation of all brute animals by this command of God, that the water and earth should bring them forth according to the different kinds he created, the divine historian concludes the account of this great work with the creation of man. *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the catle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

The inspired writer proceeds to relate the declaration of God's will to mankind, signifying his appointment and permission given to them, and the creatures subject to their dominion, of food suitable to the support of their lives upon earth. *And God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat; and to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat; and it was so.*—Then follows the approbation of the Creator concerning all his work: *And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good: and the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

To preclude all farther enquiry or imagination of human curiosity, relating to the manner how all things we see began to exist, we may be assured, the description already given is the most full and perfect we are able to receive; *For thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them;* that is, the Almighty Power of God brought them all into being, according to his Will, expressed by his Word.

The order of time observed in the successive productions of the great Creator, has respect unto the condition of that creature who was designed, after his example, to cease from work on the seventh day, as, *On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.*

In this short but full account of the birth, or generations of the heavens and the earth, it concerns us particularly to reflect upon that part of it where the history of mankind is begun, without which all human records must have continued imperfect, if it had not pleased God to afford this beginning.

To introduce this important act of the Creation, we are told, *God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*; by which we are led to conceive these words were spoken to a person in the same power and image of God. But although this passage could afford to the Jews no sure foundation to conclude there was a plurality of persons in the Godhead, yet it must be considered as prophetic or preparatory to the fulness of that Revelation made by God, *in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, we are no longer in doubt to whom those words should be applied.*

After the declaration of God's Will to make man in his own image, to have dominion over all the earth, it follows, *God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.* That is, God made man to resemble himself in power of action or life; for whereas all other animals of the earth are determined to the actions of their lives by impressions of external objects affecting their senses, whence all their pleasures or pains are derived; Man was created with an internal power of action, independent of outward objects, or of the pleasures or pains
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that might arise to him from thence ; for he was made with an understanding capable of receiving the commands of his Maker, to govern his will according to the Will of God : his understanding was open to receive the notices of the Divine Will, and his will by the Law of his Nature was to be determined by his understanding, informed of the Will of God ; by the inseparable union of his understanding and his will, as influenced by it, the image of God in man was to be preserved.

As Man was distinguished, by his principle of life, to be superior to all other animals of the earth ; so, in consequence of this excellency of his nature, he is invested with dominion over all the earth, and all brute creatures which it contained.

It is to be observed, that the account of the creation is closed, and the general approbation of God is passed upon it, before we are any farther instructed concerning the original of man, than that *God created man in his own image ; in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them ;* because in these words the distinguishing mark or character of his nature is set forth, by which he was to be known and separated from all other creatures of the earth.

But it follows, in the way of recounting the generations of the heavens and the earth, that the inspired Historian comes particularly to make mention, that *the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul ;* (or literally, according to the original text) a soul of lives.

The body of man was formed of the dust of the ground, hereby a-kin to brute animals, over whom, and over the appetites of this brute or animal nature, taken from the earth, he had dominion given him, when *God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a soul of lives,* the spiritual principle of life from God being in command of the inferior or animal life.

His situation in the Garden of Eden is next related: *And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, and the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

The circumstances relating to the formation of the woman of the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, are particularly described, corresponding to the account of the man being formed out of the dust of the earth, from whence, in this manner, they derived the body, or the animal part of their nature, which in both was made subject to the spiritual principle of their life, when God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them.

From this short account of the original or primitive state of man, as he was created and placed in the Garden of Eden, we can be warranted to conclude nothing farther concerning his happiness or the perfection of his life, but that it would have continued there for ever uninterrupted, if he had stood in his obedience unto God, by having the pleasures or motives to his actions derived from that spiritual principle given him in the image of God, and his will being directed by his understanding enlightened and informed of the will of God.

We conclude beyond what is written, if we conceive that man, in his primitive state, was endowed with an abundant stock of wisdom, equal to all future circumstances of his life, independent of immediate assistance from his Maker; for his happy and perfect life was to be preserved by having the communication always open, according to his occasions, to receive notices of the Divine Will, for enlightening the eyes of his understanding, by which he was to walk and direct his steps; from whence his happiness might be progressive,
always

always advancing to higher degrees by experience of the love and favour of God.

But how much soever the condition of our first parents might have been improved, by persevering in their obedience to the command of God, we have no authority from scripture to pronounce concerning their happiness, that it would have been greater than what they could enjoy in that earthly paradisaical state in which they were placed ; there are no promises made to them of a removal to any better situation than what that garden afforded, where there grew every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.

So that with these advantages of having dominion over all other creatures of the earth, and reaping the fruitful productions of it with an innocent and peaceful mind, grateful unto God, and ascribing to his bounty all the pleasures they enjoyed ; this short view of the primitive happy state of mankind is concluded in Holy Writ.

The sacred Historian having spoken of the great work of the creation according to the wisdom and majesty of its author, in terms reserved, yet full and clear ; he proceeds in like manner to relate another event of the highest concernment to mankind, being an account of that great revolution which happened in their state, upon the first act of disobedience committed against God.

Preparatory to this account we are told, in consequence of that dominion given unto man over all the beasts of the field, and every fowl of the air, that the Lord brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them, *and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.*

There is reason to suppose, that at this time Adam, who had dominion given to him over all these creatures, was able to discern their particular internal properties, or powers of action, by which they might be serviceable in obedience to his command ; and therefore when
they

they were brought before him, it was that he might SEE what he would call them, by observation of their capacities of motion, or animal life.

How these brute animals were to be commanded may be a subject of conjecture, on which there is no need any great stress should be laid: perhaps it might be by different modifications of sound; but howsoever they might be governed, we may probably conclude that their observance of man was not such in the beginning as now it is, and that they did not then fear him as an enemy to their lives, but were ready according to his appointment to contribute to his amusement and pleasures.

Among these brute creatures, we are told *the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made*;—he was more artful and insinuating in his approaches towards our first parents, than any other of the creatures, his companions of the field; *And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.

Such difficulties have been raised by the reasonings of doubting or sceptical men upon this address of the serpent, and the conversation which the woman held with him, as have given great advantages to the enemy to destroy the belief of it, or for the most part to conceal the consequences which have arisen from it.

We are not obliged to answer these difficulties by our own reasonings, contending to confute other men, but our faith or belief in the truth is given to it, as related in the word of God.

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There are, however, some circumstances pointed out in it, leading on, or facilitating, the deception which now passed upon the woman; for the serpent, being more subtil than any beast of the field, may properly signify an attention and readiness in him to obey and observe her; from whence she might have a greater liking to the approaches and familiarity of his attendance, as arising from a peculiar sagacity in him above the rest of the brute creatures to be watchful in her service; so that this animal, by his natural disposition, had been vouchsafed the most favourite or friendly intercourse with her.

His address to her in speech, we may conclude, was begun in view of that tree whose fruit was forbidden, and whether he eat of it in her sight, as the old serpent, now in disguise, had indeed tasted of the fruit of rebellion, or whether it might arise in her thoughts from the question he began with, that he had before eaten of that tree, and gained his speech and wisdom by it, we need not adventure precisely to determine: but it follows from the high importance of the question he put to her, that her attention was wholly fixed and given to it; so that the temptation was administered without her taking a suspicion of falshood in the serpent; herein she was beguiled.

The answer she gave does not particularly express the command of God as it was given by him; for when the serpent said unto the woman, *Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

In the preceding account of that garden in which our parents were placed, there is twice mention made of this tree; it is first mentioned where it is said, that out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge

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ledge of good and evil. And again, *The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

So that this tree of forbidden fruit, was distinguished by two circumstances; the one, that it grew in the midst of the garden; the other, that it was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and under this mark or character it was commanded by God, that it should not be eaten of: the former circumstance was common to it with the tree of life; they both grew in the midst of the garden; yet the woman speaks of it as distinguished by its situation alone, omitting that peculiar character of its being the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by which the use of its fruit was forbidden.

She makes an addition also to the commandment, and diminishes the sanction of it; for whereas God had said, *in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*; her repetition of it is, *God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

The serpent makes his advantage of the variation in her answer from what had been commanded, by expressing himself as having known before the words of God, which he now adventures directly to contradict, *Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.* Here the reason of the prohibition, because it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which she had omitted in her answer, becomes, by his artifice, an argument of the temptation, the success of which immediately follows: *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.*

The whole word of God revealed to us having reference to this transaction, it concerns us with due consideration to search into all the circumstances relating to it.

Now

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.

From this short introduction, suitable to the wisdom of Holy Writ, we are led into the deep design formed, and executed against the happiness of mankind; for as the serpent, more subtil than any beast of the field, did appear to the woman under that character only to be author of the temptation that did seduce her from obedience to the command of God, the tempter is no otherways mentioned, than under that form, in which he chose to appear for that purpose.

And he said unto the woman—

The temptation to disobedience of God's command, did not arise from within, out of the nature of man, but came from without by the serpent.

He said unto the woman—

So strong is the prejudice in favour of the fullness of our own knowledge, from observation and experience in conversing among the objects of sense, that this account of the serpent speaking to the woman, has been doubtfully received, and by many disbelieved, and by others allegorically or figuratively explained, as not agreeable to our reason or experience that it should be literally true; for they mean to be first able to unfold, before they will believe; whereas, according to divine appointment, we must first believe from the authority of Holy Scripture, and afterwards, by God's assistance, we shall be able to unfold the windings, or subtility of the serpent.

He said unto the woman—in terms clearly understood by her,

Yea, bath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

We have sure grounds from the subsequent account of enmity put between the woman and the serpent, to conclude, that there had been, previous to this temptation, a favourite regard or fondness in her towards this subtil animal; and when it became the instrument to seduce her, by the enemy concealed under that form, he

he availed himself in the natural disposition of the serpent, by his usual address to gain her attention and observance; so that the words he first spake, as related in the sacred text, appear to be spoken in consequence of particular notice given at that time, of her esteem or regard to his actions and attendance, which were directed by peculiar wisdom and sagacity in him, more than in any beast of the field; and being now in view of the tree of forbidden fruit, as her friend, he said unto the woman,

Yea, bath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?—Is it so indeed, that God hath forbidden you to eat of every tree in the garden as you would choose?

As these words contained an injurious reflection upon the goodness of God, the temptation laid hold upon her before she replied; for she does not refute this aspersion, but allowing it to pass with the tempter, she answered him in such terms as corresponded with his intention, by omitting the peculiar mark or character of the forbidden tree, and diminishing the sanction of the command, when she said unto the serpent,

We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God bath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die:—as if God had spoken uncertainly of the consequence.

By this answer the enemy gained these advantages.

1. That he was secure in his design of being concealed.

2. That by the manner of his question, he had lessened her respect for the command of God, which she did not exactly repeat; nor mention, in direct terms, the penalty of disobedience.

3. That he obtained a confession of the command being known to her, to convict her of wilful disobedience if he succeeded.

Upon these encouragements

The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die. To remove altogether her fear of what was threatened,
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the tempter absolutely denies what God said to be true; and to raise in her a desire of committing the offence, he adds the suggestion of traiterous falshood, by representing the prohibition as invidious of her happiness:

For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw the tree was good for food,—as she supposed from the serpent having eaten of it;

And that it was pleasant to the eye,—being of a fair and goodly appearance;

And a tree to be desired to make one wise,—as she was told by the tempter;

She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

The immediate consequence of their transgression follows:

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

After this short account of the effect perceived by our first parents in the alteration made in themselves through the guilt of their transgression, the sacred historian proceeds to relate the sentence passed upon them, and upon the enemy, by their offended Creator.

After he had allowed them some time for their own reflections on what had passed, he thought fit to give them notice of his approach by a previous signal; for they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, *Where art thou?* And he said, *I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.* And he said, *Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?* And the man said, *The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

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And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done ?

And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field ; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life : and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception ; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it ; cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life : thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field ; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat of it, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken ; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

From this brief account of the original transgression, and of the punishment to be inflicted for it, and the recovery of fallen man which was promised ; various heads of enquiry do arise, which comprehend the whole series of all future transactions in the world.

1. Who the enemy was, and what sentence passed upon him.

2. What the offence was which he prevailed upon our first parents to commit.

3. What the consequences of the transgression were in regard to the two-fold nature of man.

4. What remedies men of themselves were able to discover for the evils of that corrupted state, into which they fell by disobedience unto God.

5. The

5. The insufficiency of all human means to effect a recovery from it.

6. The accomplishment of the mercy promised in the person of our holy Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose righteousness the world is convinced of sin, and the judgment of the enemy doth ensue.

1. Who the enemy was that by rebellion became the enemy of God, and in consequence by seducing man into rebellion became their enemy also, is no otherways discovered to our first parents than obscurely under the threatening of that punishment to him, which was hereafter to be executed by the seed of the woman; for as he concealed himself under the form of a brute creature, and obtained his malicious purpose in that disguise, he is allowed by the majesty of Divine Wisdom to avail himself of it, and so to pass under that covering, into the sentence of condemnation pronounced upon him.

When the woman was questioned how she came to transgress, she accuses the serpent; for the answer she returned sets forth no more than that she was deceived by that beast of the earth, and accordingly when she said, *The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat*; the sentence proceeds upon this confession, and the serpent in his form is taken in guilty: to debase that form, he is cursed above all cattle and every beast of the field; he is to go for the future upon his belly, not in an erected posture, as he was when the instrument of temptation; and instead of that fruit he had treacherously eaten, his portion is to eat dust all the days of his life; he is debarred, by divine appointment, of all familiar approaches towards the woman, that for the future there should be enmity between them, and between his seed and her seed; and then lastly, the denunciation follows against the enemy concealed, pointing out some future period of time, in which the seed of the woman should prevail over the serpent to bruise his head, who was to have power to bruise the heel of his conqueror.

From this sentence passed upon the serpent, these consequences were to follow,

1. That by his form debased and cursed, and the enmity put between him and mankind, the memory of the transgression committed by his means should be preserved; and that corresponding to the guilt contracted by it, a dread and fear of death might seize the human frame on the approaches of a serpent, who should also, by natural instinct, avoid the sight of man as his mortal enemy.

2. That by the promise made to our first parents, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, the hope of a recovery should be given to sustain them and their posterity, under the sorrows which were to follow from their disobedience.

3. That as the enemy had prevailed in seducing that man from his obedience unto God, who was the representative of all mankind, another representative was designed, and declared to be of the seed of the woman, who would defy and destroy the power which the enemy obtained over them by their compliance with his temptation; which cuts off hereby the hope of the enemy, by the mercy of a deliverance promised to them who were seduced by him.

2. It follows in the next place, to observe what the offence was which the enemy prevailed upon our first parents to commit.

The outward visible offence was eating of the fruit of a particular tree, planted in the midst of the garden of Eden, and called, by the Lord God, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of which he commanded the man, *thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

But the inward motives, or incitements to any action, being in all cases necessary to shew the nature and quality of it, we must, in this instance, enquire particularly what they were; and they are clearly pointed out in the short terms of address made unto the woman by the tempter: for by his question, *Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*—she was led to think injuriously of the goodness of God towards them,

In conceiving a suspicion from the evil spirit, that the command of God was not for their good, that they should not eat of every tree of the garden; and her answer being given conformable to this suspicion, as not mentioning either the command or penalty of disobedience in the express terms of God's authority; by this wavering disposition of her mind the enemy proceeds to lead her on to a direct opposition and disbelief of what God had said, taking upon himself a full contradiction of the divine command, when he said to her, *Ye shall not surely die*;—hereby denying the truth, and the power of God. And to procure her belief in this lye, he advances to encrease that suspicion she had already entertained of the goodness of God, that he was jealous of their understanding and excellence above other creatures, and would not therefore allow such addition to it, as would follow by the eating of that forbidden fruit; for so he affirms to her, that *God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil*.

Upon taking this malicious complicated lye of the enemy for truth, and rejecting the word and truth of God, *she took of the fruit and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat*.

So that the TRANSGRESSION was a violation of their FAITH in the word of God, to believe in the word or LYE of the enemy; a departing of the soul from God, to lay hold upon his creature as endued of itself with properties to compleat their happiness, according to the falshood suggested by the enemy. The eating of the fruit was only a visible proof or confirmation of these internal distempers of the soul, contracted by communication with the evil spirit of the tempter.

The spiritual LAW of man's nature requiring that his Will should be always governed by his understanding informed of the Will of God, this law was broken and set aside by his transgression.

In the commission of it, his will was influenced by motives which his understanding could not approve:

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an injurious suspicion of the goodness of God, a doubting or disbelief of his power; an ambitious design of being like him in wisdom, with a false conceit or imagination of happiness to arise from eating of the forbidden tree; these were the incitements to transgress, for which they had no other foundation of encouragement, but the word of the serpent, given in opposition to the word of God.

The Understanding and the Will being separated by this offence, the IMAGE of God in man, consisting in the union of these powers of his mind, was then defaced; he became liable in his actions to be influenced as brute creatures are, by *the KNOWLEDGE of good and evil* by his senses, and is fallen, or brought down to *walk by Sight*, to give his attention to external objects, and by conversing among them according to that corrupt principle, to be directed in his actions by the pleasures and pains of sense, as the inferior animals of the earth.

3. What the consequences of disobedience were in regard to the two-fold nature of man, are now to be considered.

The first effect of it perceived by the transgressors, which is mentioned in the sacred record is, that *the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

The serpent had said unto the woman, *In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened*; making this consequence an argument of his temptation, by adding, *and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil*;—and so far he told them truth, that their eyes were opened; yet according to his intention it was a lye, to raise deceitful imaginations of a mighty increase of their happiness that they should be as Gods; but so soon as their eyes were opened, it follows, *they knew that they were naked*; and, despoiled of their innocence, they were ashamed of appearing naked to each other, as being now liable, through the power of IMAGINATION, to be directed by
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their appetites or passions, like the beasts of the earth.

Shame, which is the painful consciousness of acting by inferior and unworthy motives or sensations, leading to establish the government of the passions, in opposition to the spiritual principle of understanding, and living by the Will of God, was now introduced by the Fall of Man, as the natural and inseparable attendant of guilt.

Nakedness, and shame, and fear in appearing fallen and degraded from that excellence of life they had enjoyed above other creatures of the earth, teach them to seek for a covering to their nakedness, and they find none better than this, *that they sewed fig-leaves together, to make themselves aprons*; a circumstance to be remembered for abating the pride of man.

Under these uneasy apprehensions, arising in their minds from the guilt and folly of their transgression, they are required to appear before their offended Creator, when *they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the Garden.* By seeking now to conceal themselves from the all-seeing eyes of God, in hiding themselves under the shades of the trees of the Garden, they gave proof of their weakness of understanding, corresponding to the nakedness and infirmity of their outward bodily frame.

But as if he were not seen under this covering for his shame, the Lord God being now, as they conceived, at a distance from them, *called unto Adam, and said, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the Garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

The Apostle tells us, *Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression*; that is, he was not deceived as she was, by the tempter, under a borrowed form, assuming a fictitious character of friendship to her; but he disobeyed the divine command, as he makes answer to his Creator, out of love or regard to the woman; *The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat.* A mutual desire of being both in the same condition, engaged her to propose, and him to comply with the temptation which she offered.

And the Lord God said unto the Woman, What is this that thou hast done?

Such is the mercy of God, that by this question we are not expressly taught to conceive his anger and indignation moved at the heinous offence committed against him, but rather to observe it as an expression of his wonderful compassion towards his fallen creature, as having destroyed itself.

After the confession made by Adam and his wife, and the sentence pronounced upon the serpent, we are told what judgment passed upon them, conformable to the sanction or penalty of the command they had transgressed. As God had said they should surely die in the day of their disobedience, they were informed by him what the consequences of it were to be, preparatory to that event of their death.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

As death had entered into the world, and the earth was now to be peopled by successions of a mortal race of men, the sorrow and conception of the woman was multiplied; in sorrow to bring forth children, with pains of sickness and diseases peculiar to her condition; and that her desire should be to her husband to find favour in his sight, to whom permission is granted to rule over her,

her, who had led him into rebellion, when he obeyed her voice.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Here it is declared, that for the disobedience of man the ground is cursed; so instead of that fruitfulness with which it was blessed for him, when out of it God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, he must now seek his food in the sorrow of bodily labour, to eat of it all the days of his life; to be exercised with pains and carefulness, to root out thorns and thistles, that he may eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of his face to eat bread, until he concludes this state of sorrow and afflictions, by returning unto the dust out of which he was taken; that as he was told he should surely die for his disobedience, so by his presumption being guilty of it, he must especially remember this part of his sentence, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

After this sentence pronounced upon our first parents, being yet in the garden, we are told, that *Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living; and that the Lord God made them coats of skins, and clothed them.*

We may be at liberty, from this circumstance of their cloathing made of the skins of animals, to suppose they were slain at the institution of sacrificing; that as their skins were made a covering for the nakedness of their bodies, the life or blood of them should be offered as a covering for the guilt of their souls; to signify, by the death of the animal, a confession of what is due to the offenders on their part, for whom it is sacrificed;

crificed; and to set forth, by the divine appointment and acceptance of it, the death of the great expiatory sacrifice, by which all the sins of God's people were to be covered; so that before man was cast out from that happy seat of bliss, which he had forfeited by his rebellion, he had some prospect given him of the blessing of a future recovery and restoration, by divine mercy and favour to be vouchsafed towards him.

The disobedience of our parents having made them unfit to dwell any longer in that garden of pleasure in which they had been placed, we are informed of the divine purpose, and the execution of it in removing them out of Eden, when *the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken: so he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

The manner of expression, that *Man is become as one of us*, corresponds to what God said, *Let us make man in our image*; and the same observation occurs upon it. And in regard to what we should understand by the declaration of divine counsel, as here mentioned, we cannot doubt but that it signifies to us, that as our parents had been, by a vain imagination raised in them through the fallhood of the tempter, so far exalted above their condition, as to believe they should be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil; so it might follow, that although they were sentenced to death for their transgression; yet if they continued to have access to the tree of life, they might also presumptuously eat of it, and live for ever, as they had before in imagination become as Gods; lest the man might hereby increase his folly and offence, *therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken, to be employed in business suit-*

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able to the support of his mortal state ; and guards of angels were placed in visible forms, *to keep the way of the tree of life.*

Upon the removal of man out of Eden, the seat of happiness, of which by his offence he became unworthy ; his condition of life was altered, to become suitable to those weaknesses and disabilities he had contracted by rebellion against his Maker : so that in order to support the life and health of his body, he must submit to labour, *to till the ground* ; which designation of his employment includes the whole compass of those continual toils which are necessary to his welfare in this mortal state ; for his body became liable to pains of sickness and infirmities, preparatory to the change it must shortly undergo, by the dissolution of it into dust.

But as these disorders of the body were consequent to the distempers of his mind, wilfully depraved by means of the evil counsel of the enemy ; it is needful to enquire what connection and correspondence there is between the offence and the punishment of it, as declared to us, and determined by the judgment of God.

Upon the act of disobedience being committed, we are told, *the eyes of them both were opened.* Of this consequence they had hopes given them by the address of the tempter, who, by his own experience, had known that alteration in his power of life by rebellion against God, to which he persuaded and betrayed the parents of mankind.

As they ought to have been directed, in all their actions, by an invariable attention to the word or will of God, enlightening their understandings to govern their wills, which, by the law of their nature, were to be for ever united, the enemy, by his subtilty, contrived to dissolve this union, and to introduce other motives to determine the will, contrary to the word and command of God. This, we know, was done by a false suggestion of the enemy, in opposition to the truth of God, setting forth such properties in the forbidden fruit,

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fruit, as, when eaten of by them, their happiness would become absolutely perfect, and independent of their Creator.

The only proof they could have for inducing them to believe the lye proposed by the tempter, was the fair appearance of that *tree, that it was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes*; in which the outward testimony of their senses so far agreed to confirm what they were told, and to incline them to think of it also as *a tree to be desired to make one wise*; therefore, relying upon this information of their eyes, and eating of the fruit, in pursuance of it, *the eyes of them both were opened*; that is, their senses, or bodily eyes, informing them of the properties of outward visible objects, were now preferred to influence their wills; and the eyes of their understandings were closed, being deprived of illumination from the Spirit of God, which had been given them when they were created in the image of God, and remained with them so long as they continued in a state of obedience to him.

The communication being cut off between God and man, and the law of his nature broken and set aside, he must learn by experience, in conversing among the objects of sense, what their properties are, as concerning his condition among them; and he is now at liberty to be determined in his actions, as other animals are, by pleasure or pain received by his senses; that is, by the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL, communicated to him by outward sensible things, affecting the organs of his body.

The liberty of acting according to his IMAGINATION, respecting the properties of external objects, as Good or Evil, in regard to the pleasure or pain they produce in us, was that consequence of the transgression, destructive of the happiness of man, which was intended and accomplished by the enemy. According to his promise, *Ye shall be as Gods*, they were deprived of the knowledge of the Divine Will, and left to act by the knowledge of Good and Evil, a principle brought in by

by their disobedience, to live by it according to their own wills, hereby opposing and contradicting the will of God.

When they departed from the law of their nature, they lost the freedom essential to happiness, being subjected to live by the corrupt principle, directing their wills to that course of action which ends in misery and death; from which we cannot be freed, until we renounce that knowledge of Good and Evil, which, by the great offence, was preferred, and became thereby a false principle of life; and, by rejecting it, betake ourselves to live by the Word of God, as the true principle of life; then we shall *know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

So that all the intricate difficulties relating to the freedom of the Will are easily resolved by attending to the true account of our liberty, which, being invariably connected with our happiness, does consist in acting according to the original law of our nature, by which our wills were obedient to our understandings, instructed in the Will of God. By departing from this law, and submitting our wills to be influenced by the corrupt motives introduced by transgression against God, we are involved in slavery; that is, our actions necessarily lead on to the destruction of our happiness in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, *and the end of those things is death.*

Such was the consequence of rebellion against God, that the life of man was cut short to a day, the longest life of man being short of a thousand years, which are as one day to that life in which he had been intitled *to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*, continuing faithful in obedience to him: and preparatory to this sudden change which must happen to his body, he is doomed to labour in the sweat of his face, to eat bread for the support of his mortal state, continually reminded by his labour, and by his food, that he is of the dust, and to it must return.

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In regard to his mind, the spiritual and invisible part of his nature, in which the enemy laid his foundation, for the ruin of man, by those evil dispositions he contracted from him ; the change in this part, the soul of man, was more dreadful than what appeared in his outward bodily frame.

The support and the power of his life, by which he was distinguished from other creatures of the earth, as being made in the image of God, to obey him according to his understanding, informed by communication from the Holy Spirit of the will of God ; this support and power was cut off by his transgression. After he had disobeyed the will of God, the knowledge of it was intercepted from him, and he was afraid of meeting with his offended Creator ; having vainly aspired to be independent of the Divine Will, he was consigned over to his own will, to act by the forbidden knowledge of Good and Evil, which he had presumptuously introduced ; so that he has this principle alone, as of himself, to exercise his mind, or to REASON upon it, to find out a law or rule of life.

By this principle, brought in through disobedience to the Will of God, death, and all natural evils preparatory to it, came into the world, and so *passed upon all men*, as children brought forth in sorrow to the first unhappy parents, the guilty representatives of all mankind. By this principle affording corrupt motives to the understanding for directing the will, all moral evils have arisen ; as the same distempers of the mind with which the first offenders had been infected by the enemy, to obtain the knowledge of Good and Evil, still continue to be produced, as the natural fruits of it, in their posterity.

S E C T. IV.

WHAT the condition of man was in his primitive state, the law or governing principle of his nature, the happiness he enjoyed, and the forfeiture of it by disobedience, we learn from the word of God, which has conveyed these great articles of our faith in terms so clear and full, as perfectly to contain what we ought to know of them, yet in expression so short and reserved, as to escape our observation, unless it does please God, by his grace and assistance, to awaken our attention, and to prepare our understandings for instruction in the truth.

Upon this foundation laid by divine authority, we may proceed on sure grounds to look farther into the account of the condition of mankind, since their expulsion from that seat of happiness, of which they became unworthy by their transgression: which leads us to observe,

The next period of their history, for which we must consult the sacred writer, beginning with the time of their banishment out of Eden, and ending with the destruction of a wicked race of men, by a general judgment, in a flood sent upon them for that purpose.

As man had gone astray from his happiness by disobeying the Will of God, whose image in him was defaced by his transgression, the divine intercourse and communication with him was cut off; his understanding was no longer informed by continual notices of divine assistance to lead him in the ways of happiness, and his Will was not subject to his understanding, enlightened with heavenly truth, but was liable to be influenced by corrupt motives, taken from outward objects, by his IMAGINATION exciting unruly passions to deprave and disturb his life.

Our first parents in these circumstances entered upon their life of labour and sorrow; but they had in the time of their innocence, and upon the occasion of their offence,

offence, received the clearest information of the Will of God concerning their condition, and were therefore qualified to transmit the knowledge of him to their posterity, together with those circumstances relating to their happiness, while they continued in obedience, and the sad consequences of their transgression, which may justly be supposed to have made the greatest impressions on the minds of their children, and thereby disposed them to retain the light of nature in the moral world, that is, the knowledge of God the Creator, which was hereby propagated and conveyed to the following generations of mankind.

In this period of the world, when the lives of men continued for many centuries upon earth, so that the age of one man was more in years than one half of the number computed from the Creation to the Flood, the fundamental truth of Natural Religion was delivered with the greatest advantage to ascertain and confirm it, as it might have come to any person living in that age of the world, either from the first man, or from some other not removed above one or two in generation succeeding from him.

But notwithstanding this advantage in favour of Natural Religion, the wickedness of mankind became very great, and they had corrupted their ways to an extreme degree, in a few centuries after the first offence was committed.

The first man born, that we read of, was a murderer, who envied his brother for having the preference in divine favour and acceptance; and being led by this motive to destroy him, resembled the old enemy, who had accomplished the like purpose against Adam.

In regard to this transaction we may observe, that on the resentment of Cain appearing against his brother, the Lord interposed in behalf of his righteous servant Abel, and vouchsafed to argue with Cain to prevent the execution of his evil intention, by setting forth the cause for which his offering was rejected; that sin lay at his door which he had committed; but howsoever in
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regard to what he could expect from his brother, altho' he were accepted by God on account of his righteousness, yet as to their circumstances in the world, the desire of the younger Abel should be towards him the elder, to find favour in his sight, and he should rule over him; therefore as his brother would be obedient to him, he ought not to have a quarrel against him: but these arguments did not prevail on the evil spirit of Cain to appease his wrath, until he had shed his brother's blood.

The curse and the mark set upon Cain was a declaration of divine authority, condemning the horrid deed, and gave sanction to the principal law of nature, forbidding murder.

In regard to any form of divine worship observed in this early state of the world, we have no particular instruction given us concerning it; only it is said of some certain time, that *then men began to call upon the name of the Lord*;—which we may suppose to mean the assembling of them together for that purpose; and this may account for that distinction among these first inhabitants of the earth, which is soon after taken notice of, when we are told, *that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose*.—For the sons of God may properly signify such persons as acknowledged his divine power and authority, and called upon his name in some common or public form of religious service, in acknowledgment of his being the Lord or Governor of the world: and by their meeting together on this account, they were distinguished from MEN who, being the descendants of Cain as cursed from God, may be supposed to have paid no worship to him, but to have lived with other wicked persons, joining in their manners, without any appearance of divine worship among them.

In this age of the world, enlightened by traditional revelation with the knowledge of God the Creator, and of his Will, as discovered to the first man before his transgression, we must observe, that mankind had

a trial of what could be done in pursuit of their happiness, by the powers of their minds exercised upon the principles they had then to guide them in their reasonings about it, that is, upon the knowledge of the true God, and upon that other principle of their own acquirement the knowledge of good and evil by their senses: and from the authority of the sacred writer we are assured, that the corrupt principle prevailed, and men did not regard the laws of nature or society, which they knew were according to the Will of God, but in a very short time, estimated by comparison with the age of men in this period, the inhabitants of the world were corrupted in an extreme degree; for *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of his heart was only evil continually. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way.*

During this state, in which men continued many centuries upon earth, the temporal prosperity and happiness they might be capable of enjoying upon it, was then an object of much greater consequence to engage their attention, than it could have been since among the short-lived generations of men; and therefore they had the highest inducement to observe and maintain the law of nature, for preserving order and good agreement in the world, upon which their happiness in it must depend; but the reasoning of their corrupted nature overturned this argument, and by the number of their years their iniquities were multiplied; through the prospect of so many centuries as their lives might endure, their passions were the more inflamed to make provision for their pleasures, and produced all sorts of disorders, as every man by injustice and violence consulted how to gratify his own unruly appetites. And, in consequence, although these early inhabitants of the earth knew God by the clearest and shortest tradition, and by the length of their experience, had the best opportunity of improving their minds by meditation on the works of God, and were

were also most concerned, in point of worldly interest, to live according to the law of nature ; yet with all these advantages they became exceedingly depraved and wicked, that when Almighty God looked upon the earth, it was altogether abominable and corrupt in his sight ; so that he declares his purpose no longer to deal with them by affording instruction to their understandings, by which men ought to be governed, but says, *My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also his flesh* ;—he is so far sunk into sensual or fleshly desires, as to act only on the principle of receiving pleasure or pain by his senses, in like manner as brute creatures are directed in living according to the flesh. And therefore as their iniquities were full, he determined to rid the earth by a sudden destruction of them, as a generation of noxious animals, living in misery by their own violence and wickedness, and refusing to be moved by his holy Spirit striving with them, to persuade them to forsake their evil imaginations, and return unto the fear of God.

But of this evil generation there did remain one righteous man, who *found grace in the eyes of the Lord*—for *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations ; and Noah walked with God* : and therefore God was pleased to take him into his counsel, and inform him of his purpose concerning the earth, for *God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me ; for the earth is filled with violence through them : and behold I will destroy them with the earth.*

In consequence of this resolution, God commanded Noah to prepare an ark for himself and his family to escape from the flood by which the earth was to be destroyed : accordingly *by faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet*, that is, of which there was no appearance when God gave him the warning, *moved with fear* of that judgment which, according to the word of God, he did believe would certainly come, he *prepared an ark to the saving of his house*, by the which he *condemned the world* that still continued in their wicked

ways, notwithstanding his preaching to them, *and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*:—through his obedience to the word of God, in consequence of his faith, the generations of mankind were continued from him and his sons, who became the representatives of all the future inhabitants of the earth; and upon their going forth from the ark, they received the blessing of God, *to be fruitful, and to multiply, and to replenish the earth*; with power over all creatures in it, corresponding to the grant made to Adam, the first parent of mankind.

The next remarkable circumstance which occurs in the sacred history, after the flood, is the distinction made by Noah, in regard to the descendants of his three sons. The occasion of his prophetic designation of their future condition, was taken from an unnatural and disrespectful act of his son Ham, as having mocked at his father's nakedness, to the sight of which, it may be supposed, he had been led by his son Canaan.

Noah being made acquainted with this undutiful instance of his behaviour, said, as of divine authority, *Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.*

Japhet and Shem, as representing their posterity, have hereby the preference in power and command given them over the son of Ham; yet in such manner, as that *SHEM*, the youngest, has a blessing peculiar to his family above the other two; for Japhet shall dwell in the tents of *SHEM*, finding there his defence and protection, and Canaan shall be his servant.

The wonderful extent and completion of this prophecy, has been abundantly remarked by commentators upon it, who have also particularly observed its reference to the coming in of the Gentiles, the sons of Japhet, to embrace the true Religion; and by this circumstance how aptly it was foretold, that *he shall dwell*

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in the tents of SHEM, who was the ancestor of him who was the father of the faithful.

This distinction made by Noah among his offspring, appears some time after to have produced that attempt, which occasioned their dispersion in several branches, to possess and to people the earth; for it may be justly supposed, that to evade the force of this prophecy, marking out the posterity of the elder brethren of SHEM as inferior to his, that the sons of Japhet and Ham undertook the building of a city and tower, to *make a name*, (Heb. a SHEM) a man of mighty power for themselves in this city and tower, to maintain their liberty against any invasion that might be made to bring them under subjection to their younger brethren; and to prevent their being scattered abroad on the face of the earth as servants to them.

It appears from the judgment of God upon this attempt, that it was impious, and therefore must have been undertaken by *the children of men*; that is, wicked men, according to the sacred style, with an intention to oppose the divine Will, which refers us to the prophecy delivered by Noah the righteous servant of God; so that the building of the city and tower of Babel, to frustrate the completion of that prophecy, was a monument, or work, of infidelity, and, through divine interposition, became the means of fulfilling the purposes of God, which the builders of it intended to evade.

After the Lord at Babel did *confound the language of all the earth*, the dispersion of mankind ensued; and *from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth*, being separated into distinct families to inhabit and to people the different parts of the world.

According to the prophetic designation of Noah, the family of SHEM, continued from his son Arphaxad, is taken peculiarly under the divine protection, and the generations leading unto Abram being related in their order, it follows in the sacred history: *The Lord had*

said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee: and in thee shall all families of the Earth be blessed.

Two things were then promised to Abram.

The first, a great degree of temporal prosperity to a numerous progeny descending from him;

The other, that some great advantage or blessing is to be derived to all families or nations of the world by him, as their representative in the favour of God.

The manner in which these great events were accomplished, makes up the body of providential history, marking out the steps taken by divine wisdom for the recovery or redemption of mankind.

From this period of the call of Abram, the great ancestor of the people of God, who was blessed by him to be an instrument of conveying his mercy to all families of the earth; there is a distinction made according to divine purpose, between that great nation which was to descend from him, and all other nations of the earth, in such manner, as that the prosperity of the peculiar people of God was to depend visibly on their being conducted by his hand, and governed by laws established by his authority; while other nations were left in the hands of their own counsels, to form societies or kingdoms according to the rules of human wisdom and policy, such as the understandings of men, exercised upon the principle of reason, were able to devise.

The history of mankind is here naturally divided into two branches:

The first contains the records of the Jewish nation descended from Abram;

The other comprizes the transactions of all other states and kingdoms of the earth.

The providential history, compounded of both, comprehends all the great movements in the world, leading
on

on to the redemption or recovery of mankind, to a state of favour and reconciliation with God.

The history of mankind, considered in this view, as tending to the accomplishment of this great design, does afford the materials of that volume, to the understanding of which all human wisdom and learning would be well applied, that it may conspire, through the assistance afforded to us in the sacred writings, *to bring glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.*

The order necessary to be observed in contemplation of this great plan of moral or providential history, does arise from the foregoing observations, concerning the principles of all human actions, which are to be referred, either,

1st. To that principle of the knowledge of good and evil, introduced by apostacy and disobedience unto God, upon which alone our reason can be exercised, independent of Divine Revelation; or,

2dly. To that principle, corrected and restrained by Divine Revelation, introducing, explaining, and perfecting the LAW of NATURE, (which is the moral law of the two tables given to the Jews, who were separated by the ceremonial law from Gentile idolaters); or,

3dly. To the principles of pure Revelation in the Gospel of Christ, setting aside the false and corrupt principle of the knowledge of good and evil, and all the reasonings of mankind derived from it.

The chain of prophecies delivered by the inspired writers, connects all the parts of this great VOLUME into one body, and is subservient to the purposes of infinite mercy, in conveying assurance for HOPE of deliverance to mankind from the power of the enemy, who is hereby warned of his own insufficiency to contend against the wisdom of God, declaring his counsels from the beginning unto the end of time, and marking out that order of periods and revolutions in his government of the world, for the accomplishment of his

mercy to it, which the adversary shall not be able to disturb, though permitted to exert his art and industry to the utmost, by that evil principle he introduced for influencing the wills of men to withstand and oppose the Will of God, whose purposes are firmly established under the sacred providential band of prophecy, circumscribing all events as subject to his wisdom and power, bringing forth judgment unto the truth in victory.

The history of the Jewish nation, as the peculiar or chosen people of God, begins with the call of their great ancestor Abraham, to observe the orders of divine appointment, relating to his journeying into a particular country, which was designed for the inheritance of his posterity; and after receiving the command, as expressed in the words before recited, it follows, that *Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.*

That circumstance in the character of Abraham, which recommended him to the divine favour, and on which account he has the peculiar honour of being mentioned in holy writ, as the friend of God, was his receiving, with full assurance of hope, the commands of God, and giving always, as he did in this case, a ready and unreserved obedience to them; not considering what the event of his actions might be according to the appearances of things to his own reason, but trusting with entire confidence to the Truth and almighty Power of God, he was accepted and approved by him for his FAITH.

It is with design to shew this matter in clear and full light, that the Apostle, upon his entering into argument with the Jews, who would have had the terms of salvation confined to their own nation, and to the observers and proselytes of the Jewish law, insists upon

two points relating to Abraham, by the proof of which he confutes their mistaken opinions in favour of themselves.

First, he shews, that Abraham was approved of God, by that excellency in his character before-mentioned, which they did not sufficiently attend to; *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?* What peculiar merit was it that he had found, or attained unto, according to the flesh, that made him so high in the favour of God? Was it that he exceeded all other men then living, in works of mercy or justice, and in discharge of all the duties of social or moral behaviour? *For if Abraham were justified by works of this kind, he hath whereof to glory, in comparison with other men, but not before God, to whose blessing and assistance it must be imputed, that he was better than they; but he was not justified by works; For what saith the Scripture? Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.* The internal act of his mind laying hold on the truth of God, and resolving stedfastly to be governed by his word, was that circumstance which made him to be accounted righteous through the grace and mercy of God.

Upon this point the Apostle continues to argue by other quotations from the Scripture, concluding to the same purpose, that a man is justified by imputed righteousness in the sight of God, not by works, but by faith.

To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness; even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose sins are covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin; which implies a confession from David, that this blessed man he speaks of, was not justified by inherent righteousness in the performance of moral duties, or works of obedience; but he is the blessed man, who being defective in such-like works, as all men are, yet his

FAITH is counted for righteousness; and to him the Lord will not impute sin, although, with regard to his moral behaviour, he has not been free from it.

The other point, with respect to Abraham, which the Apostle insists upon in confutation of the Jews, is to prove, that Abraham was justified and accepted of God before he was circumcised, when he was not distinguished from other men by that outward rite which was the legal mark or sign of a Jew; but Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, while he was in uncircumcision, as other men are; and after being accepted and approved as righteous, *he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised*; and therefore, as Abraham was accepted and counted righteous for his faith, so may the Gentiles also by faith be admitted to the favour of God, and be intitled by his grace to have the terms of salvation offered to them, although they are not taken into that covenant, of which circumcision was the initiatory right or ceremony of admission.

These two points are clearly evinced, according to the Apostle's argument, from the Sacred History of Abraham, which we have now under consideration; for in regard to circumcision, he was not required to comply with it until he was ninety years old and nine, and when his son Ishmael was thirteen years old: but his faith is spoken of long before this time, when he was childless, Ishmael not being yet born; for upon the promise God made to him, that as the stars are for multitude, *and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be*; it follows, *He believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness*.

By giving our attention to the words of the Apostle, we may clearly apprehend in what the excellency of the faith of Abraham did consist, *who against hope from all human appearances, believed in hope*, of the accomplishment of what God had promised. He had no doubts or difficulties on his mind about it, but was
fully

fully assured, from God's word to him, *that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be ; and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb ; both of them as unlikely to have issue, as if they were naturally dead. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, on account of these circumstances, which made it improbable, or rather impossible, according to our own way of reasoning by experience ; but he was strong in faith, as resting with entire confidence on the promise, and thereby giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform ; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him ; that is, the account we have of Abraham, which sets forth the excellence of his faith in the temptations or trials he underwent, is not preserved in the sacred records for his sake alone, to shew how high he stood in the favour of God, but to us also ; it is written for our instruction, to whom it shall be imputed for righteousness, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences unto death, and was raised again for our justification, if we are approved by faith in the sight of God in this case, as Abraham was in the other corresponding to it.*

From hence the Apostle proceeds in his argument, by application of what he had proved, in respect to Abraham being justified by faith, to shew that the terms of acceptance or admission to divine favour, do always continue to be the same ; for as the faith of Abraham, in what God had said to him, was imputed for righteousness ; so likewise our faith in what God hath spoken to us in the Gospel of his Son, will be imputed to us for righteousness ; *therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Another

Another argument urged by the Apostle, to convince the Jews, that the Gentiles were included in the covenant of promise made to Abraham when he was accepted of God, does arise from the terms in which this promise is delivered, when God said to Abraham, *So shall thy seed be*; which is explained by a subsequent declaration to signify, *I have made thee a father of many nations*; as *in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*. So that the Jews, who would have the terms of salvation confined to themselves, the children of Abraham, according to the flesh or to the law, they did not duly consider the words of the promise; for by these declarations of the divine purpose it appears, that the children of Abraham, according to the promise, were not such only as descended from him in the natural way of human generation; but he is to be reputed the father of all those persons who are of the faith of Abraham, who believe in the one only true God, upon hearing his word declared to them.

This manner of reckoning up the children of Abraham, though clearly implied in the terms of God's promise to him, was yet very distant from their apprehensions with whom the Apostle was then arguing; and so it would be obscure to the understandings of all mankind, if it were not divinely explained in the Gospel, according to the full meaning and extent of the promised grace and mercy of God, *to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed*; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all believing Jews and Gentiles, who are accounted his children, *before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead* by his Almighty power, and by his knowledge *calleth those things which be not yet existing, as though they were present* before him.

Since the Jews did principally rely upon their privilege of being the chosen people of God, because they were descended from Abraham their father, according to the flesh; this mistaken opinion is thoroughly confuted

futed in the history of Abraham's life, examined and explained by the light of the Gospel; from whence it evidently appears, that their title to divine favour and protection depended upon their being the children of the faith of Abraham, in holding that principle of life by communication from him, of whom God spake as very high in his favour upon this account; *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him*; which refers to what had been repeated immediately before, *All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him*; in him, as their father in the faith.

In the preaching of John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord, *when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism*, and knew, that their obstinacy in rejecting the terms of the Gospel covenant, would chiefly arise from this mistaken opinion of peculiar excellence in themselves, derived from their natural birth, he cautions them against this error; *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.* That is, Do not suppose, that your having flesh and blood derived from Abraham does convey to you a title to the favour of God; for in this respect you are deceived: the flesh and blood of all men is alike of no account in the sight of God, who is able, by his Almighty Power, to change these stones into the substance of human flesh and blood, such as you have from Abraham: therefore, by laying aside this vain pretence to divine favour, he called upon them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; that being now warned to flee from the wrath to come, they might be ready to embrace the terms of the Gospel, and become thereby intitled to the blessing of the children of Abraham by faith, according to the truth and promise of God.

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The same distinction is made by our Saviour concerning the children of Abraham according to the flesh, and his children by faith according to the promise, in a long conference he held with the Pharisees, which we find in the 8th chapter of St. John's Gospel.

The Pharisees taking up the argument against our Lord, in opposition to what he had said *to those Jews which believed on him; If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* They answered him, *We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man.* Jesus answered them, *Verily verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.* That is, ye are deceived, for ye are under the bondage of a sinful life, and his servants ye are, whom ye obey in the works of sin; *and the servant, who is disobedient, and committeth sin, abideth not in the house for ever, but will be cast out by the just judgment of God: but the son, as the head and master of the household of God, abideth for ever, in full power in his house: If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* I know that ye are Abraham's seed, according to the flesh; yet on this account ye are in no sort acceptable unto God; *but ye seek to kill me, who am sent by him, because my word hath no place in you: I speak that which I have seen with my father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.* To this they answer again, in the same sense they had urged it before, *Abraham is our father.* Jesus saith unto them, *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* That is, ye are mistaken in your account of yourselves as the children of Abraham; ye are not his children in the account of God; *if ye were Abraham's children by faith, according to the promise, ye would do the works of Abraham; ye would believe as he did, and walk by faith: but now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God.* Like this did not Abraham; *ye do the deeds of your father.* To which they reply again, to the same purpose as before, *We be not born of fornication,*
but

but are lawfully descended from Abraham our father, and with him *we*, all of the Jewish nation, *have one father, even God*; meaning by this latter part of their answer to confute the distinction he had made before.

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, by your deriving from him the principles of your actions or spiritual life, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God: neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech?—as having plainly declared wherein your error does consist, in reckoning upon yourselves as the children of Abraham; but the reason is, *even because ye cannot bear my word, or doctrine, as the word of truth.* And to reprove, in the severest manner, the obdurate Jews of that generation, he tells them, *Ye are of your father the devil*; that is, though God hath made your souls and bodies, in like manner also as ye derive your flesh and blood from Abraham, yet ye are not the children of Abraham nor the children of God in his account; for ye derive from the evil spirit the principles of your lives and actions, by following your own imaginations and perverse wills, in opposition to the grace and truth of God. *And the lusts of your father ye will do—by murdering me, a man that hath told you the truth—as he was a murderer from the beginning—in the first intercourse he had with mankind, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him: when he speaketh a lye, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

As the history of Abraham, the father of the faithful, has the first place in the providential history of mankind, it concerned us particularly to observe those circumstances of his character by which he was recommended to the grace and favour of God; and they cannot be more clearly pointed out than as we have seen them by the arguments of St. Paul, in his appeal to the Jewish or sacred records, to convince the Jews, from the account of Abraham there preserved, and the promises of God made to him, that they had not the authority of Holy Scripture to plead in proving themselves the

the chosen people of God exclusive of other nations of the world, merely as the descendants of Abraham by human generation; since his children, in this respect only, were not intitled to the blessing, which, according to divine purpose and declaration, was to belong to them alone who were by faith the HEIRS of PROMISE; it being evident, from due consideration of the terms in which the PROMISE was contained, *that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham* in the account of God, whether they are Jews or Gentiles: *And the Scripture, dictated by the holy Spirit, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED*; from whence the Messiah informs the Jews, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad*; for he understood the GREAT PROMISE of the Redeemer was contained in those terms, who is *the author and finisher of our faith* by his gospel, and *the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*, throughout all nations or families of the earth.

Hence we see that the faith of Abraham consisted in these two main articles of it.

First, He believed in one God, Creator of heaven and earth.

Secondly, According to his promise, he believed in a Saviour who was to be of his seed, by whom he would become a father of many nations, and that all the families of the earth would be blessed in him.

In conformity to the terms in which this promise was delivered to Abraham, we find there is a correspondence continued in the style of the inspired writers making mention of the manner in which this blessing is conveyed to all mankind; for according to what God had said to him, *a father of many nations have I made thee*, the children or heirs of promise are esteemed in the account of God as begotten by their instructors, their fathers in the faith; of which we have a notable instance in the xlvth Psalm, from the Psalmist describing in the

most exalted strains of sacred poetry, the glory of the Messiah, the majesty and stability of his throne, and the excellency of the sceptre of his kingdom; and in consequence of *the things he had made touching the King*, addressing himself to the church, or faithful congregation of the Jewish people, *Hearken, O daughter, and consider; incline thine ear to these things, to the praises of this heavenly King; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; or, as the Baptist said afterwards, think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; have no confidence in your descent from your fathers according to the flesh, from Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, as the fathers or heads of your houses or families; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him: and then, after setting forth the increase of the church by her conversion, he adds, instead of thy fathers, shall be thy children, instead of deriving honour from boasting of your fathers, your glory shall be in your children of the true faith, whom thou mayest make Princes in all the earth.*

The prophecy of Isaiah is fruitful also in examples to the same purpose, declaring the wonderful accession of converts, to the true faith, hastening into the church, as children of the believers of the Jewish nation, when they have confessed the truth and acknowledged their Messiah.

Isaiah xlix. 17. *Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together and come to thee: as I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.*

Then shalt thou say in thine heart, *Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?*

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their Queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Isaiah liv. 1. *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Ver. 5. For thy maker is thine husband, (the Lord of hosts is his name;) and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall be called.*

Ver. 11. *Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. (Rev. xxi. 19.) And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.*

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Isaiah lx. *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee, thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

Ver. 9. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God: and to the holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their Kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.*

In these most elevated expressions, the evangelical prophet, the historian of the hidden wisdom and counsel of God, hath described the consequences of this glorious event, of the reconcilment and recovery of the Jewish nation to their ancient place in the favour of God: and among these effects of it, the principal circumstance of joy and triumph will arise from the acknowledgment of all other nations made to them as their fathers in the faith; and as the prophet addresses the Jewish church, *Thy children*, who have attained to the knowledge of the true God, through the dispensations of grace vouchsafed unto thee, *shall make haste* into thy presence, to make obeisance before thee.

The children that thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other, after being deprived of the children of thy youth, the children of thy desolate and widowed state, *shall say again in thine ears, The place is too straight for me; give place to me that I may dwell.* As it came not into your mind to reckon upon these, the true believers of the christian church, as your children, when thou seest their numbers hastening unto thee, *then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone: these, where had they been?* Then follows

the answer of divine mercy and truth; *Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, &c.* and for these it is said, *Sing, O barren, &c. for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.* More sons of Abraham and of Israel are begotten in the true faith, by the fulness of the Gentiles coming in since the Jewish church was barren, rejected, and desolate; and of these her children, there are more than when she was the married wife, the chosen, the peculiar people of the Lord. And to give assurance of God's perpetual mercy and favour towards the Jewish church, restored and recalled from their miserable dispersion, it follows, *Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, &c.* instead of that temple which has been utterly ruined, and of which one stone is not left upon another, *Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones; and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord in pure religion, by his word, uncorrupted by traditions or mixtures of earthly wisdom: and great shall be the peace of thy children.*

Many other passages might be cited from the prophecy of Isaiah in like manner, describing, by inspiration of the Spirit of God, the wonderful enlargement of his church, by the conversion and reconcilment of the Jews, in acknowledging their Messiah our Lord Christ, and the Gentiles thereupon accounted their children in the faith.

Hence we may discern the Apostle of the Gentiles, guided by the same Spirit, making use of the same language to his converts or sons in the faith; to the Galatians, his little children; to Timothy, his own son in the faith; to Titus, his own son after the common faith; to Philemon of Onesimus, begotten in his bonds; and particularly to the Corinthians, whose behaviour, in some matters, he was reprovng in the power of that authority he claimed by his relation to them, *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons*

I warn you, for though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers; though numbers may come and build on that foundation of knowledge you have in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers in the faith; to me alone that title does belong, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. I am your father, in being the first teacher who instructed you in it.

By these expressions, which are common to the inspired penmen of Holy Scripture, we are referred to the original prophecy delivered to us in it; the seed of the serpent are the children of the devil, who fulfil the lusts of their father, by following their own imaginations in evil designs, arising from that corrupt principle of action he introduced in opposition to the command of God; and the seed of the woman, our Lord the Messiah, the head of the church, which is his body, with all the faithful members of it. The divine interposition for the recovery or salvation of man, put enmity between the seed of the serpent and her seed, while each party endeavours to make proselytes to their own principle of action, in opposition to the other; that is, according to the stile of sacred writing, the faithful will beget children unto Abraham, heirs of the promise, joint heirs with Christ, and sons of God: and the wicked and unbelievers by their example and persuasions making a proselyte, they make him also a child of the devil.

This observation may lead us also to understand rightly those expressions of the Psalmist concerning his enemies, which appear hardly reconcileable with his holiness and charity: for we are to conceive him as speaking either in the person of Christ, the head of his church, or in behalf of the collective body or society of the faithful, or in his own person, as of one eminently distinguished in the favour of God, and in the knowledge of his Will, and the purposes of his grace and mercy to mankind; and his resentment expressed against his enemies, is to be understood of his zeal

and attention to support and defend the cause of the innocent, and helpless, and oppressed servants of God, in opposition to the craft and treachery, the violence and injustice of the wicked, and the unrighteous persons of this world, against whom he intercedes with God, that they might either be awakened to repent of their evil works by means of temporal punishments; or if they continued obstinately in rebellion, that they and the children of their pride and perverseness might be cut off from the earth, to stop the progress and the infection of their impiety. Thus in the sixth Psalm, we are warranted by a quotation from it in the Acts of the Apostles, to understand the complaint of the Psalmist, as spoken in the person of Christ; and the enemy is Judas, and such others, his companions in apostacy, who are in confederacy against the Lord of life, and are his adversaries for his love.

But it is chiefly to be remarked in regard to our Lord Jesus Christ the son of David, that he is to be accounted his son in the spiritual sense by faith, and as the heir of his righteousness, thereby intitled to the throne of his father David by promise, according to the word of God, assuring him, *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips: once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.* These expressions are fully accounted for by understanding the seed of David continued from him unto the Messiah, by the instruction of faith; and therefore in the lxxii^d Psalm, inscribed for Solomon, when the Psalmist begins with this address, *Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son.* He takes this petition as granted, and then proceeds, in clear terms, to describe

describe the success and prosperity of his righteous Son, the Christ of God.

Here we find the answer to that question proposed by our Saviour to the Pharisees, who were gathered together : *Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ, whose son is he ? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool : if David then call him Lord, how is he his son ?* According to their notion of the Messiah, as intitled to the throne of his father David, by being lineally descended from him, in the order of human generation, they could not answer his question, to shew any reason why his father should call him Lord ; but the Apostle has explained it, in speaking of the peculiar privileges of the Jews, *of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever*, by the union of the divine nature to the human ; or, as the Creed has expressed it, by taking the manhood into God.

From those words of David we are to observe the correspondence of his faith with the faith of Abraham, concerning the Messiah ; and therefore it may be, that we find in the genealogy of our Lord, recorded by St. Matthew, it begins with the generation of *Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham* ; the line of Faith being herein preserved, as derived by Solomon to Matthan, the father of Jacob and Heli ; the latter the natural parent, the other the father of Joseph in the faith ; whereas, in the genealogy delivered by St. Luke, it appears to be traced up through the order of natural succession from Matthat (or Matthan) by Nathan, another son of David, unto Adam, *which was the Son of God*.

But to return to the history of Abraham and his posterity : The promise made to him, upon his finding favour with God, contained two things, as we have already observed ; the first concerned the estate or con-

dition of his natural descendents, who being taken peculiarly under the divine protection, should thereby arrive to a great degree of temporal prosperity; so that, according to the words of the promise, a great nation should be made of him; and by him a blessing was to be derived, not only to his own posterity, but, according to the terms of divine purpose, it is said to him, *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*; which is the other main article of God's promise to Abraham.

The accomplishment of the former part of this promise is confessed and acknowledged, and sufficiently testified to preclude all disputes about it; but the accomplishment of the other part of Abraham's blessing is obscure to his own children, and is not acknowledged by them through whom it was derived; nor is it yet made known to all families of the earth.

To search out the reasons of the Jewish apostacy, and to give an account of the causes of obscurity they find in understanding the Gospel to be the law of their Messiah, and to shew by what means it may be derived to all families or nations of the earth, are enquiries which deserve our peculiar attention, in contemplating the providential history of mankind.

Since the Jewish nation was the instrument of Almighty God, in bringing to pass the designs of his mercy to all nations of the world, the conduct of divine administration, respecting the government, and the laws delivered to that people, is of much consequence to be particularly examined; as there is no doubt, but when it is thoroughly understood, the whole system of their moral and political laws of divine institution, will be found to conspire in promoting that great end, in the most wise and wonderful manner.

We have observed, that the former part of the promise made to Abraham, assured him of the temporal prosperity of his children by that son who was the promised heir; accordingly, we find a distinct account, in the sacred records, of the growth of this great nation, issuing forth from their ancestor Abraham, whose name
God

God told him should be great : and this circumstance, relating to the name of Abraham, we must also acknowledge to be accomplished, although a great addition to the honour of his name is yet to be made by the increase of his children.

A renewal of the promise is given to Isaac, his son, Gen. xxvi. 3, 4. in the same terms it was made to Abraham ; and again to Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 13, 14. from whence it is referred to throughout the writings of the New Testament, under the title of *THE PROMISE* made to the fathers, or *THE PROMISES*, on account of the different articles whereof it consisted.

In regard to the first article of the promised blessing, as implying the immediate interposition of divine power to advance the fathers and their posterity to a high degree of worldly happiness or prosperity ; it is evident from their history, that the patriarchs themselves were not blessed with greater abundance of wealth or worldly possessions, than others of their contemporaries, who were strangers from the covenant : there is no doubt but they had a sufficiency of the comforts of this life, and perhaps a great deal more than their occasions did require : but they do not lay hold on these blessings as designed for them peculiarly by Providence, to make them happy, and to fulfil what they had to expect from the blessing and favour of God towards them. On the contrary, we see they were exercised with severe trials and afflictions, and in straits many times by the designs of their enemies ; yet they did not consider themselves as disappointed, or cut short of their hopes, by any sufferings they underwent, because they knew the full import of God's promise, respecting their happiness in another life, Upon this their hearts and their hopes were fixed, as the Apostle tells us of Abraham's support, when *by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise ; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

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And again, speaking of all the patriarchs he had mentioned, he says, *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth.*

These all died in faith, in full assurance of the truth of God, not having received the substance of the promises, the blessings of the Gospel, otherwise than by faith; but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them as really accomplished, or certainly to come to pass; and, in consequence, renouncing the vain hopes and the attempt of setting up their rest, and finding their happiness in this world, *confessed they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth.*

To which purpose the Apostle remarks upon that expression, *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country; and truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.*

Such was the language of Jacob before Pharaoh, Gen. xlvii. 9. and more particularly of holy David, Psal. xxxix. 12. and in his most excellent prayer, 1 Chron. xxix. 15. and of all other holy men, ever since the promises were made to the fathers; and the direct conclusion from hence is, such also should be the language of their children, that is, of all true Israelites.

We are told, that *it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and, according to the foregoing observations, we may be assured, that Isaac, by the instruction of his father, was acquainted with the extensive view and spiritual import of that blessing which God had given to Abraham to descend upon Isaac, according to the words of the promise, which was renewed again to himself; and we must conclude it was explained by him also to his sons Esau and Jacob; from whence we may understand the meaning of*

of that transaction between them, by which Esau was declared to be set aside, and his younger brother taken to be the instrument of divine mercy in his stead : for Jacob understanding the blessing in its true and spiritual sense, upon the occasion as it is related, said to his brother, *Sell me this day thy birthright.* It is to be supposed, that they had formerly discoursed between themselves concerning the great privilege of the birthright ; for he could not have asked his brother to make this bargain with him, without some previous knowledge of his thoughts concerning it ; and that Esau not having that assurance by faith which his brother had, of the high value and importance of the spiritual blessing descending with the birthright, might at other times have made light of it, in conversing with Jacob, regarding only what concerned his temporal estate ; which fully corresponds to the answer he made him, *And Esau said, Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do me ?* which betrays his want of faith in God to support him, and a profane contempt of his title to the blessing, which he forfeited to satisfy the craving of his appetite ; and shews likewise, that his heart was set only upon the blessings he could enjoy by having his life prolonged ; that is, upon the worldly profits and advantages of this present state ; and therefore Esau being in such a temper of mind, *Jacob said, Swear to me this day ; and he sware to him ; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles, and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.*

From hence we are prepared to consider in a proper light the following passage of their history, when the blessing which belonged to the birthright, being designed by Isaac for Esau, was, by his mistake, conveyed to Jacob.

It is said, as concerning the character of these brothers, that *Esau was a cunning hunter; a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents ; and Isaac loved*

loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison : but Rebekah loved Jacob. The particular affection of either parent was grounded on some personal circumstance of the carriage or behaviour of the children towards them ; but as God seeth not as man seeth, it followed, that by the mis-judged affection of the parents, the intention of both was defeated, and the blessing was placed where it ought to be, according to the inward disposition of the person who received it. So that Isaac designing to give the spiritual blessing unto Esau, whom he loved for his venison, gave it unto Jacob, whom Rebekah had taught to supplant Esau, with a view that he should obtain, by her artifice, a better temporal fortune or estate than his elder brother, the only blessing she could mean to get for him by her fraud : but in this respect she was disappointed ; for it does not appear, that Jacob was more powerful or prosperous in the world than Esau, but rather the contrary ; for he bowed down to Esau, whom he called his Lord, in most submissive terms, which Esau never did, that we find, to his brother Jacob.

It does seem indeed, as if this circumstance of a superiority in worldly estate had been given to Jacob in preference to Esau, as appears from the answer of Isaac to him : *Behold I have made him thy Lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants ;* or, as it is in the very words of the blessing, *Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee : be Lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee.* But these expressions are the very same with those of Isaiah already mentioned, which declare the promise and this blessing accomplished, by the terms of the Gospel being embraced by the Gentiles, as derived to them from the blessed seed of faithful Abraham, when his posterity are reconciled to the covenant of promise, in confessing to their Messiah the Lord Christ, upon a right apprehension of the privileges of their birthright ; for of that happy time *thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my*
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standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders; and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers. They shall bow down to thee, with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet. These terms, we see, agree perfectly with the blessing given to Jacob; Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be Lord over thy brethren, and let thy mothers sons bow down to thee.

The posterity of Esau are accounted the mother's sons of Jacob; and among the families of the Gentiles, they also will bow down upon their conversion to the religion of Christ, and acknowledge the blessing of it, derived from the seed of Jacob.

In conclusion of our observations on these brethren, it is obvious to reflect on the similitude between the present condition of the Jewish nation and the case of Esau, who was set aside from the covenant of promise, and the inheritance of the spiritual blessing, by his attending only to the earthly perquisites or advantages of his birthright, and despising the mighty privilege and excellency of it, in being the instrument of a blessing to all mankind; from whence his younger brother came, according to divine appointment, to be preferred in his place; which is a prophetic example clearly accommodated to the circumstances of Jacob's posterity falling off from the spiritual sense of the PROMISES made to the fathers, and thereby rejecting their Messiah, who is acknowledged by the Gentiles, their younger brethren in the faith; while they who are the eldest, by departing from the true faith, to look for a Messiah to satisfy their appetite for worldly gratifications, do as yet continue with profane Esau to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage.

The behaviour of Jacob, after receiving the blessing from his father, corresponds with the assurance he had by faith of the consequences which were to attend it; for the inhabitants of Canaan, among whom his father Isaac then dwelt, being under the curse pronounced by
Noah,

Noah, and a wicked generation, who were in due time to be cast out, to give place to God's people, according to his promise to Abraham: for this cause, as Abraham would not suffer his son Isaac to marry among them, Jacob also, by his father's direction, which he observed, went to take a wife of his own family and kindred.

In the journey he took for this purpose, in obedience to the commands of his father, we are told, that he was favoured with a vision. *And behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached unto heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.*

After this communication opened to him between the heaven and the earth, he has the blessing of Abraham renewed to him: *And behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

By this revelation of God's purpose unto Jacob, that impression was made upon his mind which was necessary for the support of his faith and constancy to the God of his fathers, throughout the future course and occurrences of his life.

The various circumstances which relate to the marriages of Jacob, and the children born to him by his wives and their handmaids, are recorded in Holy Scripture, to manifest the wisdom and power of God in so great a complication of events, arising from the numerous posterity of this patriarch, being all directed, with uniformity of design, to the accomplishment of that great end for which his children were chosen, to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

On the departure of Jacob, with his wives and children, from the house of Laban, his father-in-law, we are told, his daughter *Rachel had stolen the images that were her fathers*; and Laban, after pursuing and overtaking

taking Jacob, who had gone away from his service without his consent, accused him of having acted foolishly in so doing: yet, being warned of God in a dream, he tells Jacob, *It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt; but the God of YOUR father spake to me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad: and now, though thou wouldst needs be gone, because thou sore longest for thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen MY GODS?*

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid; for I said, Peradventure thou wouldst take by force thy daughters from me. With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee; for Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

After Jacob had given this answer, it follows, that diligent search was made by Laban in the tents of the women for the images, which were so concealed by Rachel, that he did not find them.

The word which is translated (Images) is, in the original language, (Teraphim), being compounded of (Terah) the name of Abraham's father and great grandfather of Laban, and of (Aphim) which signifies the face or countenance; and so the word Teraphim denotes the image or representation of the form or countenance of Terah. But as Laban calls what Rachel had stolen his GODS, there were probably more images than one which she had stolen; and so they might have been the images of Terah and of Nachor, the grandfather of Laban; from whence, idolatrous images were in latter times called Teraphim, being made with a supposed resemblance of these original gods of Laban; or, on a like account, to represent the ancestors of note or estimation in a family which worshipped them.

That the Teraphim were images of the human form, is clear not only from this composition of the word, but also from 1 Sam. xix. 16. when Michal put the
Teraphim

Teraphim into a bed to deceive the messengers sent by Saul to take David.

By this account we come to the original instance of idol-worship given to the human form by Laban the Syrian, in that country afterwards remarkable for inventions of idolatry.

We must observe yet farther, that the opposition of the true religion, by means of image or idol-worship, began in a branch of that family, from whence Abraham, the father of the faithful, was descended, and in that house where Jacob, the heir of Isaac and Abraham, had resided for twenty years; who, although he was not enticed by Laban to join with him in idolatry, yet Laban was not prevailed on to forsake his idols, and worship the true God, notwithstanding he had instructions from Jacob in the knowledge of him; which circumstance appears from the history relating to them. Thus we find, when Jacob first designed to depart from the service of Laban, he entreats him to stay: *And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry; for I have learned by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.*

This covetous master found, by experience of his worldly substance increasing, that Jacob had been a very useful servant to him; and so he places his prosperity to that account, which he thought most likely to have weight with Jacob in bringing him to his purpose, as acknowledging it to be due to the blessing of the Lord, the God of Abraham and Isaac; of whose revelation, or discovery of himself, and of the blessing he gave to Jacob, he had been informed by him.

Again, when Laban pursued after Jacob, with intention to seize him, and what he had taken with him, we are told, *God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.* As Laban related this dream to Jacob, he said, *It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt; but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob*

Jacob good or bad. By which relation it appears, that the command he received in his dream had its authority and influence upon him, as corresponding to the account he had from Jacob concerning the God of his father : but that Laban worshipped other gods, appears from the intercourse and the solemn engagements entered into between Jacob and Laban, when they parted from each other at Galeed. *And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar which I have cast betwixt me and thee : this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me for harm.* Then follows Laban's ratification of the covenant : *The God of Abraham, and the god of Nachor, the god of their father,* (that is, of Terah) *judge betwixt us :* or, as it is in the original, let them judge between us, the verb (*Jishpetu*) being in the plural ; by which he joins the God of Abraham to the god of Nachor and the god of Terah, the gods which by images or Teraphim he worshipped, as above-mentioned ; but, to ratify the covenant on the other part, *Jacob swears by the fear of his father Isaac.*

From this occurrence in the sacred history it is to be remarked, that as Almighty God had vouchsafed to make himself known to Jacob, by the name of the God of Abraham and of Isaac ; the author of this sort of idolatry rests his invention upon a like foundation, the Teraphim being an image or representation of the ancestor deceased, whose presence or spiritual power, as a god, was acknowledged by worship addressed to the image ; which gave birth to a complicated lye, in opposition to the truth ; first, by making gods of the souls of departed men, and then suggesting an equality between the God of Abraham, and the god of Nahor, and the god of their father, as if they were of the same order.

To conclude, on this head, we may observe, that *Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.* He gave no encouragement to take the Teraphim, but was

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confident they were not in his company, as his wives knew how much it would be against his consent to meddle with them.

Thus it befel the descendants of Jacob in after times ; when they were enticed to commit idolatry, it came among them from their neighbours, and was taken in like manner by theft, as the Teraphim were stolen, and concealed by a lye in the tent of Jacob, with the daughter of an idolater.

The following transactions in the family of Jacob, concerning the jealousy of his sons against Joseph, their younger brother ; the sad consequence it had, in leading them to destroy or remove him from among them ; the distress and anxiety of Jacob his father, mourning for his loss ; the various changes in the condition of Joseph, still abiding faithful to God under all his trials ; his wisdom in the government of Egypt ; his discovery of his brethren, and behaviour to them upon it ; their concern and guilty confusion before him ; the wonderful preparation made through his means, under the direction of divine counsel, to give support to that family, until it was arrived to full growth and maturity, for accomplishing the purposes for which they were called to be the people of God : All these events are related in the sacred pages, with that majestic simplicity of style and description, which lays hold upon the heart and the affections of the most discerning, and of the most unexperienced reader : and they do afford, at the same time, the most awakening lessons of instruction, concerning the watchfulness of Divine Providence in over-ruling the evil purposes of men, and bringing them to conspire in promoting and executing the designs of God's mercy, that so we may be taught to rely upon his goodness, and to hope for safety and deliverance, by his protection, from any pressures or afflictions that may befall us, how grievous soever they may appear.

The next remarkable circumstance, relating to the family of Jacob, which deserves to be particularly
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considered, is the prophetic blessing and designation of the respective conditions of his sons, as the heads of their tribes, which he gave them a little before his death. *And Jacob called unto him his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.* And so it has been observed from the history of the several tribes, that these last words of Jacob, concerning the state of his sons, were accomplished in a peculiar manner, as he regarded each of them in their posterity, according to his prophetic designation or foresight.

But our attention is to be chiefly given unto Jacob's blessing of Judah, as he conveyed to him, being the representative of his tribe, the special blessing given unto his fathers and to himself by God, which included the great PROMISE of a blessing to all people or families of the earth.

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion: who shall rouse him up?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his asses colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his cloaths in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

This blessing may be distinguished into two parts: the former part is composed of expressions signifying the excellency of this tribe in temporal power, representing also the spiritual power which was to arise in it; and so far it corresponds in expression with the blessing given to Abraham, and also to the blessing of Jacob by Isaac his father.

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. By these words he is distinguished from all the rest of his

brethren, who are hereby excited to give their attention and approbation unto him as their chief or leader : *Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies.* These words are nearly the same with those spoken unto Abraham, *Thy seed shall possess the gate of thine enemies :* both signify an absolute or compleat victory over his enemies. *Thy father's children shall bow down before thee ;* which is to the very same purpose of Isaac blessing Jacob, in saying to him, *Be Lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down unto thee.* As it has been already observed concerning Esau and Jacob, that the superiority of the sons of Jacob to those of Esau must be explained of that spiritual power which was to arise among the children of Jacob ; so likewise we must understand the words of Jacob to his son Judah, *Thy father's children,* that is, they who are the true sons of Israel in the faith, *shall bow down before thee,* in acknowledgment of deriving that great blessing from thee.

The following words of this blessing, which correspond to what had been before expressed, do represent, by lively images, the great prowess of this tribe of Judah, under the guidance of divine power, irresistible in attacking and subduing all his adversaries. *Judah is a lion's whelp,* by true descent deriving his fierceness and courage. *From the prey, my son, thou art gone up,* after taking and using it according to his will. *He stooped down ; he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ;* he took himself to his rest in full security. *Who shall rouse him up ?* who shall dare to provoke his fury ?

So far the blessing of Jacob given unto Judah does agree, in the main sense and purport of it, with the blessing of God, as expressed and given in general terms to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, assuring them of great temporal power and prosperity in their descendants ; being also a representation of that spiritual power which was to arise and appear among them. According to this observation we find a correspondence in the Revelation made to St. John, when he *saw a strong*

strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in the earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon: the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.

The latter part of the blessing of Jacob bestowed upon Judah, corresponds peculiarly by explication to these terms of the divine blessing given unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when God said unto them severally, *In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

By the words of Jacob, the time is ascertained for the accomplishment of God's mercy intended for all the nations of the earth; and he is particular also in pointing out the method of it, by a person whom he describes by name, and by some signal consequences attending his appearance.

The time of this great person's coming is expressly declared by limitation; *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet.* That is, the temporal power of that tribe shall not cease, but it shall have authority, either by kings or law-givers, raised up or supported in it, *until Skiloh*, or Siloh (from the verb SALAH) the Peaceful, or Peace-maker, or *the Prince of Peace*, according to the style of Isaiah, shall come; *and unto him shall the gathering of the nations be.* The power of the scepter and of the law-giver being united in this great Prince, in obedience to him shall the gathering of the people or nations be.

In the following words of this blessing we have a wonderful description of the power of this Prince of Peace, but in obscure terms involved so as we should not be able to comprehend the meaning of them, if it had not pleased God to unfold them to us, by corresponding declarations of his Prophets and Apostles.

Binding his foal unto the vine, and his asses colt unto the choice vine (SOREK); he washed his garments in wine, and

his cloaths in the blood of grapes : his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

In the former part of the blessing conferred upon Judah, the warlike prowess and superiority of his numerous tribe had been represented by very strong and lively images, as we have already observed ; and in this latter part of it, a description of the power of that great person is given, who was indeed the lion of the tribe of Judah ; but, in his appearance and conversation among men, the Siloh, the meek or the peaceful one.

Accordingly, this great Captain of our Salvation is described as binding his foale unto the vine, and his asses colt unto the choice vine ; accomplishing this great work of subduing his enemies, without the noise, or the shew, or the pomp of earthly conquerors, and in obtaining an absolute victory over them ; *he washed his garments in wine, and his cloaths in the blood of grapes.*

To understand these images we must observe, that all the Evangelists make a very particular mention of this circumstance, relating to our Blessed Lord, that, in order to make his entry into Jerusalem before the Passover, at which time he suffered, he sent two of his Disciples to bring an ass and her colt to him ; and as St. Matthew relates it, *all this was done, that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken by the Prophet, (Zech. ix. 9.) saying, Tell ye the Daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee MEEK, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass. And the Disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their cloaths ; and they set him thereon : and in this manner Jesus entered into Jerusalem.*

And here we must attend to the Prophet Isaiah, v. 1, &c. *Now will I sing unto my well beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine (SOREK), and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein : and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes, (corrupt*
or

or rotten grapes). *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge; I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

By comparing the testimonies of the Evangelists with this prophetic description of Isaiah, we find the explanation of the terms of Jacob's blessing unto Judah.

But we must also observe our Lord's own words to his disciples, before he went up to Jerusalem, to undergo his sufferings: *Behold, (says he) we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man, shall be accomplished; for he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again.*

In this disposition of mind, patiently to submit to the will of his enemies, and to suffer death from their hands, our Lord entered into Jerusalem; and in this condition he was discerned by Jacob, and by the Prophet Zechariah, who speaks of him as before recited; *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee MEEK, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.*

Our Lord riding in this state, which was very different from the pageantry of an earthly prince, going to encounter and take revenge of his enemies, he came

into the city, and *binding his foal unto the vine, and his asses colt unto the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, making them pure in his own blood, and his cloaths in the blood of grapes*; through the power of his resurrection subduing or treading down his enemies, as grapes in the wine-press. *His eyes shall be red with wine, as inflamed with furious resentment; and his teeth, representing that weapon which proceeds out of his mouth, shall be white with milk*; he being of like disposition with babes fed upon milk.

On this occasion he was viewed also by the Psalmist, who addresseth him in Psalm xlv. *Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty: with thy glory and thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, of meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thy arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.* From whence, in the remaining part of the Psalm, he passes on to describe the triumphant state of the kingdom of the Messiah.

But to return to the Evangelical Prophet, we shall find him in clear and express terms, according to the foregoing explanation of Jacob's words, addressing this mighty Conqueror.

Isaiah lxiii. 1, &c. *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?*

I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save,

Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?

I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury

fury it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

These are wonderful expressions, when compared with the words of Jacob, and the foregoing quotation from Isaiah, illustrated by the testimonies of the Evangelists; all conspiring, through the guidance of the holy Spirit of God, to point out our Lord Jesus Christ the Siloh of Jacob, who was enlightened at the time of his giving the blessing unto Judah, to look down through the far distant ages of the gospel, and to tell his children what should befall them in the last days.

When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

*And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him;—*and having buried him according to his desire in the cave of Machpelah, he returned into Egypt with his brethren, who are again alarmed, from the remembrance of their offence, lest he should now, after his father's death, discover his resentment, and take revenge upon them: from this suspicion they are prompted to renew their obeisance and submission to Joseph; and *his brethren also went and fell down before his face, and they said, Behold, we be thy servants;* which was again a full accomplishment of the prophetic dream or vision he had concerning them.

That he might give them assurance of his forgiveness, Joseph said unto them, *Fear not, for am I in the place of God?* that you should humble yourselves in this abject manner before me: repent, and ask pardon of him whom ye offended by your behaviour to me; *but as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly to them.* Which passage affords a most admirable lesson of instruction for reconciling ourselves to our brethren in like manner, after injuries received, by
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leading them to repentance through our forgiveness of them, giving glory to the over-ruling providence of God. *And Joseph lived an hundred and ten years ; and, drawing near his end, he said unto his brethren, I die : and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old ; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*

By this solemn oath and promise they were reminded of the promises of God made to their fathers, and their hope was encouraged by the faith and assurance of Joseph, whose last words they had much cause to regard, in memory of their great benefactor, and to reverence them as spoken by him, whom they knew to have been highly distinguished in the favour of God.

S E C T. IV.

Containing Observations on the Book of Exodus.

AND the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose up a new King over Egypt which knew not Joseph ; and he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we : come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

When the time was nearly expired in which the divine purpose concerning the removal of the nation of Israel was to be accomplished, the circumstances of their condition in Egypt gave an occasion to the Prince and the people of that country to be watchful over them :
for

for as they were exceedingly increased in their numbers, and were of great advantage to the Egyptians by their industry and skilfulness in mechanical employments; the King of Egypt did wisely foresee that very great damage might ensue to his kingdom, if they were permitted to withdraw themselves, and their goods along with them, from his dominion.

The Israelites lived in Egypt as a people distinct from the other inhabitants of it, and were preserved in this situation by their worship of the God of their fathers, in opposition to the idolatries of the Egyptians, with whom they did not incorporate by joining in marriages with them; and upon this account they were looked upon as sojourners or strangers in that land, according to what God had said to Abraham; for so we find it was foretold to him, *Gen. xv. 13. Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.—*

They were considered also as strangers upon another account, because they had hope and assurances from the promises made to their fathers, that they were to remove, at a limited time, to that country of Canaan, from whence they came, to be settled there in the full enjoyment and possession of it; and this circumstance of their expectations to remove being known to the Egyptians, and particularly to their King, he addressed himself to his counsellors to prevent this purpose: *Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there shall fall out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.*

Although the Israelites were very numerous, and on that account might have been formidable to the Egyptians, yet it does not appear that they gave them any cause to suspect they would strive with them for mastery in Egypt; but the sole object of their jealousy over them was, lest they might take some fitting opportunity to make their escape, and so deprive their masters,

the Egyptians, of the great advantages they had by their industry and services.

From hence arose that conflict of divine power manifested by the servants of God to set his people free, in opposition to the pride and obstinacy of Pharaoh and his counsellors. And here it is to be remarked, that the utmost effort was made by them, with a view to the political interest of their country, to keep the Israelites under subjection by oppression of rigorous servitude, and by violence, to prevent their departure from among them, notwithstanding the dreadful calamities they had endured upon that account: by which attempt the purposes of divine counsel concerning the establishment of the nation of Israel, were opposed and counteracted so far as human wisdom and power could extend; and in this design the magicians and sorcerers, the ministers of the powers of darkness, did conspire, to defeat and annul the decrees of God.

The like reflection may occur to us in considering those events which are related in the sacred history, concerning the birth and preservation of Moses, and his education in the court of the King of Egypt; for in his circumstances it was highly improbable, according to all human appearance or reasonings, that Moses should have escaped from death, to which he was exposed, and from the dangerous temptations he was under to lead a dissolute life among the parasites of the Egyptian court, to come to the resolution of *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* From these observations we should be led to acknowledge the all-sufficient power and wisdom of God, in disposing the hearts of men, and those events which appear most likely to disappoint his purposes, to conspire and contribute to hasten forward the accomplishment of them.

After Moses had made his choice of taking part in the afflictions of his brethren, and was in danger of his life for delivering one of them, by slaying an Egyptian

tian for smiting an Hebrew, he fled from Egypt into the land of Midian.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian : and he led the flock to the back-side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush : and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

By the angel of the Lord appearing to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush, Moses was summoned to take heed to this great sight, and to hearken when God called unto him out of the midst of the bush. It is here observable, that the visible form of the flame of fire is said to be the ANGEL of the Lord, (*who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*) and when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush :—so that the visible appearance is of the Angel, but the WORD is the word of God.

This remark is to be applied to all appearances of angels by divine command, which are *all ministering spirits*. For although there was a plurality of forms seen at the same time, as in the case of the three angels appearing unto Abraham before the destruction of Sodom ; yet, when he knew they were heavenly messengers, he addressed himself unto them in regard to the business they came upon, by his intercession with them, as unto one Lord speaking in or by them.

In the subsequent chapter, which relates the appearance of two angels to Lot, to save him out of the destruction of Sodom, it does not seem, from the account of it, as if Lot did suppose them to be any other than men of good behaviour, who were strangers in that place,

place, until such time as they had given him assurance of their coming to destroy that city, and were just entering upon that work; and then, Gen. xix. ver. 18. *Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord;—the word (Adonai) being rightly translated, as in the singular number, corresponding to what had been said before,—the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life;—so that the miraculous destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was brought upon those cities by the visible ministration of angels appearing in that work; and the power by which they acted being spoken of as residing in them, it follows, the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire—but in virtue of their commission, it proceeded from the Lord out of heaven.*

As the intire order of the providential government of mankind lies open, under one view, to the infinite wisdom and power of God, there is a connection or series of events marked out through the whole design, as revealed in the sacred history of it, whose parts have a mutual correspondence and relation to each other: so we find in this instance of the call of Moses to be the servant of God, in that important work of leading his people out of their bondage in Egypt, to their settlement in the promised land, that Moses received his commission, and authority to support it, at the mountain of God at Horeb, where the angel of God appeared unto him in a flame of fire, and the NAME of God is revealed to him, being at that same place, where he did afterwards receive the commandments of God as a mediator between him and his people, who were present at the time of the delivery of the law, when the Lord descended with thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount. Which circumstance of the place Moses is desired to remember, when God said unto him, *This shall be a token unto thee, that I have*
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sent thee : When thou hast brought the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you ; and they shall say to me, What is his name ? What shall I say unto them ? And God said unto Moses, I AM that I AM : And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you : this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

In this long conference which God held with Moses at the bush, it may appear wonderful that he should continue so doubtful, as we find he was, of his ability to execute that commission with which, God tells him, he would send him unto Pharaoh. But it is to be considered, that the divine power and wisdom is magnified by the accomplishment of his purposes through the weakness and imperfection of the instruments he has chosen ; and his glory is exalted in the great work of our salvation, by the infirmities of men who are his ministers in it.

Upon the occasion of this great sight appearing unto Moses, *he hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God,* and in this posture he received the account of what God purposed to do in delivering his people out of the hand of the Egyptians.

After God had declared his compassion for their affliction, upon hearing their cry, and knowing their sorrows, and that he had resolved in his mercy to set them free from their task-masters, it follows, *Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh :* an expression which does not signify a command, without the consent of Moses going by his own will upon the errand which God tells him he did mean to employ him in : for the motive which should incline him to undertake

dertake this business he had laid before him, that he might join in ridding his brethren out of their misery.

In answer to this invitation, Moses appears to refuse his consent, and as much as might be to decline the office, not attending to that authority with which he was to be sent, but reasoning from his own insufficiency, *he said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?* To help him out of this weakness, in arguing from himself, *He said, Certainly I will be with thee.*

But Moses is not yet satisfied that he will be able for this task, and from hence he proceeds, in the words before quoted, to require the NAME of God.

Before Moses had made this request, the Lord had told him, *I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;*—and so it may appear unnecessary that Moses should have enquired any farther about the Name of God.

But it is to be observed, that as Laban the Syrian did corrupt the worship of the God of Abraham with the worship of the God of Nahor, and the God of their father, the title of the true God was usurped by idolatrous nations, worshipping the lords or gods of their own inventions under the same title with the Israelites, who worshipped the God of their fathers; and therefore, as the Israelites were now under bondage in Egypt, from whence they were to be brought up into the place of the Canaanites to possess and enjoy their land; the request of Moses in desiring to have the NAME of God, has a tendency to obtain an evidence, by the Name of God being given him, that the God of Abraham was superior to all the gods or lords worshipped as protectors of those idolatrous nations whom the Israelites were called upon to dispossess: and accordingly this purpose was answered, when *God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.* And he said, *Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

It follows in the vith chapter of this book of Exodus, that *God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord:*

Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them.

We find in the xvth chapter of Genesis and 7th verse, that God said unto Abraham, *I am the Lord (Jehovah) that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.* So that he had spoken of himself by this name expressly to Abraham, before this revelation made to Moses.

To reconcile these passages, it is to be observed from the original text literally translated, it is thus: *I was seen unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, in the Almighty God.*

The revelations vouchsafed to them did set forth this name for their assurance of the accomplishment of the promises made unto them, through his almighty and irresistible power, *but by my NAME JEHOVAH was I not known unto them.*

Although he had spoken of himself by this name, yet he was not known unto the fathers by it, the name (JEHOVAH) being first given to Moses by explanation, which was to convey an evidence to the understandings of the Israelites that God Almighty had spoken it, and in consequence that he had sent his servant with the message he had to deliver to them.

As God was seen in miraculous instances of his almighty power manifested unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he now condescended to inform the understandings of their children, by the exposition of his sacred name to be known unto them.

The NAME (JEHOVAH) of four letters in the original language, is called by the ancient Hebrews the ineffable or inexpressible name; not because it could not be expressed or pronounced, but because out of reverence they did not usually pronounce it. But this title of the ineffable or inexpressible name does belong to it in a much higher sense; for the meaning or exposition of it was beyond the reach of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so God was not known unto them by it, no human

understanding being equal to that task, and therefore it was honoured by an exposition from God himself, when he said unto Moses *I am that I am*: on which account this high and holy name (Jehovah) may be eminently called the expounded name (SHEM HAMEPORASH) a title which the cabbalistic Rabbies have much abused, by their conceits of interpretations relating to it.

From hence it appears, the God of Abraham was distinguished from all other gods or lords in his name explained to Moses, which is the same our Lord Christ gave to himself in consequence of that question put to him by the Jews, *Whom makest thou thyself?* To this Jesus answered, *If I honour myself, my honour is nothing; if the honour I lay claim to did proceed only from worldly considerations which might exalt me in your opinion, that sort of honour is nothing; but my honour is derived from another source; it is my Father that honoureth me, (for I and the Father are one) of whom ye say that he is your God; but although ye have his name, yet ye have not known him according to his truth, and the declarations he has made of himself; but I know him, and if I should say I know him not, which by your unjust attempts against my life, ye endeavour to compel me to say, I shall be a liar like unto you, who have heard the truth, but will not receive it; but I know him, and keep his sayings, by fulfilling what he has promised concerning me; on which account your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, in the accomplishment of that promise, that in me, being of his seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. In which promise he saw it (my day) and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I AM; or, as it is in the original language, εγω ειμι, where the pronoun εγω is of particular force in the expression, and may be translated, (I) who am now speaking to you as a man; εγω ειμι; I, I am; implying an union of the divine and human nature in Christ*
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our Lord; which the Jews obstinately refusing to acknowledge, *then took they up stones to cast at him.*

By this evidence we discern our Lord Christ to be *God who said unto Moses I AM THAT I AM; Jehovah, who appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty; the same who is, and was, and is to be, who is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, according to the last revelation made to St. John, which corresponds to the first made unto Moses of this great and glorious NAME, incommunicable, not to be usurped or invaded, as belonging only to him who is unchangeable from everlasting to everlasting, Amen.*

It is to be observed, that the phrase *εγω ειμι* is recited by all the Evangelists, as spoken by our Lord on other occasions; thus by St. Matt. xxiv. 5. and St. Luke xxi. 8. on account of impostors making their attempts to pass upon the world for Christ in his second coming, of whom he says, *many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ,* επι τω ονοματι μου λεγοντες, *εγω ειμι ο Χριστος, or εγω ειμι; that is, upon my Name assumed, saying, I am Christ, or I am he: hereby usurping the name of Christ, and counterfeiting his person by a false imitation of him who had taken that high and holy name which of right did belong to him, as he said of himself, before Abraham was, εγω ειμι.*

In other passages, where these words are spoken by our Lord of himself, the meaning of them coincides with the interpretation of the name. So it is in the viiith of St. John 24, and 28. and St. Matt. xiv. 62.

It may not be amiss to observe, that the highest attempt against the honour of God's name (JEHOVAH) was made under that inscription (ει) in Greek characters upon the temple of Delphos; by which the deluded votary was instructed to say unto the object of his idolatrous worship (THOU ART) ει, being the second person from ειμι, I AM.

God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of you fathers, the

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you : this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

By the former evidence given of himself in his incommunicable name, God was distinguished from all the gods of the heathen or idolatrous nations : by the latter evidence, relating to his appearance unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he is to be known as their God for ever unto all generations of the faithful, who must confess the blessing of their knowledge of the true God to be derived unto them through those their great ancestors in the faith.

In consequence of this revelation made unto Moses, he is informed again of God's merciful purpose towards his brethren in Egypt, to bring them up out of the afflictions they suffered in it, and to bestow upon them the fruitful land of the Canaanites ; and then he is commanded to gather the elders of Israel together, to acquaint them with his message to them from God, and the lord tells him, *they shall hearken unto thy voice* ; but Moses, who still continued doubtful of his own ability for this great work, *answered and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice.* To remove this objection, God is pleased to strengthen the authority of his commission, in adding to it another evidence, by conferring on him the power of working miracles.

And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand ? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground ; and he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent : and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand now, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand. That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom ; and he put his hand into his bosom ; and when he took it out, behold his hand was leprous

as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again : and he put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out of his bosom, and behold it was turned again as his other flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land : and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.

Moses is the first person we read of in Holy Scripture who was divinely commissioned to work miracles, which he is directed to perform before the elders of the children of Israel, and also in the presence of Pharaoh and his servants, to obtain authority and credit for that message he had to deliver from God unto them, requiring a release for his people from their bondage in Egypt.

On this occasion it may be proper to enquire what we are to understand by MIRACLES, and for what end it has pleased God to command them to be wrought.

For this purpose we must observe, that the first temptation, which prevailed with the woman to transgress the command of God, was founded on a suggestion that there was in the forbidden fruit a property inherent and independent of the Will of God to improve or encrease the happiness of her condition, which effect she would quickly experience by eating of it, notwithstanding his prohibition. In this crafty representation the main argument of the tempter did consist, and by this artifice her imagination was raised to conceive this lye in opposition to the truth, from whence she fell into the act of infidelity and disobedience.

From this same principle all the false reasonings of mankind, pursuing their happiness, by following their own Wills, in opposition to the divine Will, are to be derived ; for by our experience in conversing among outward objects, we come to know the GOOD and EVIL, or the pleasures and pains which we are capable, by our

senses, of receiving from them; and by acting from this principle of pleasure and pain, as constantly and necessarily to be derived from sensible objects, we are led into imaginary and deceitful views of our happiness.

Miracles, which are wrought by divine power and appointment, are designed to destroy this work of imagination, and to set it aside; for they are proposed to convince our understandings, that there are no properties necessarily or essentially inherent in visible objects, but that all their qualities do immediately depend on the Will of their Creator.

The presence of his power is declared by MIRACLES, giving the sanction of his authority, to confirm the testimony of those persons who work them according to his Will.

As we are led by our senses into a false chain of reasoning from our experience of certain causes to certain effects, the appeal by Miracles is also made to our senses, to shew for our conviction, that the connection between causes and effects is owing to the immediate Will of God, who can instantly change, suspend, or dissolve it, and therefore all power belongeth unto one cause, that is, unto God.

The appeal being made unto the senses, which notify the change made in visible sensible objects by the working of Miracles, the argument arising from them is directed to the understandings of those persons who are eye-witnesses of the works, and is addressed to the spectators who are present, as speaking out or evidencing that truth which they are brought to confirm.

This observation accounts for that form of expression which God made use of unto Moses, when he said, *And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken (le kol) to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.* The Hebrew word (aoth) translated by the Greek word (σημειον) denotes a miracle, as the sign, or literal character, or form of the voice of the power of God,

So that the whole force and entire evidence given by a Miracle, is directed to those persons only who hear the Voice, that is, who are present to the work when it is done, or who afterwards see the visible effect of it.

This observation is confirmed by what our Lord said unto the Jews, John x. 37. *If I do not the works of my Father, that is, such Miracles as give evidence of his almighty power residing in me, believe me not that I am the Son of God; but if I do the works of my Father, though ye believe not me upon my own credit and authority, as one of your brethren, believe the works, speaking clearly and evidently to your senses, on whose information you solely depend; that is, by the Miracles I do, be convinced, that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

To the same purpose he said again, John xv. 21. *If I had not come and spoken to them, if they had not received from me the clearest information of their duty, by my discourses delivered to them with divine authority, witnessed by my Miracles, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin, because they have the evidence of their own senses to convince them, from whence they argue in all other cases; and therefore, by rejecting that evidence in opposition to me, they have no cloke or pretence for their sin, they are inexcusably obstinate. And so his argument proceeds in the following words: He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them (before their eyes) the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.* But to return to the consideration of this power of working Miracles given unto Moses, whose message was to be proved by them to have come from God.

The instructions which Moses received, and the objections he raised from his own insufficiency, do lead us to understand, that the whole effect, according to divine purpose, arising by the work of a Miracle, is to be produced in the minds and apprehensions of those persons before whose eyes it is performed; and this effect

is FAITH, or belief of divine power and authority residing in him who works a Miracle.

The Lord said unto Moses, *Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, &c. And Moses answered and said, But behold, they will not believe me, &c. And the Lord said, What is that in thine hand, &c.* So that to convince the elders of Israel of the divine authority by which he spake, Moses is commissioned to work Miracles, that they might believe and hearken unto his voice.

If the due effect is not produced in the minds of those persons who see a Miracle performed before them, so that they are not convinced by it of the truth and divine authority given to that person who does the work, their testimony of the Miracle will not produce faith in the minds of other persons to whom the work is related. And again, if a Miracle has its due effect upon the understandings of the persons before whom it was wrought, and they believe by it, they will also have power in persuading others to believe from their witnessing of the Miracle. So that the FAITHFULL are begotten of the FAITHFULL, who obtain credit by their FAITH, and not barely by the account or relation of the Work or Miracle by which they were at first engaged to believe.

Of these cases we have notable examples in the sacred history.

We have an instance of the latter case from the transaction now under consideration in the message by Moses to the elders of Israel: *And Moses and Aaron went, and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people BELIEVED:—*that is, the elders, and all they who were present, believed the message to have come from God; and, by their FAITH, persuaded also their brethren who did not see the signs to believe by their relation of them; so that the whole congregation
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of Israel were ready to obey Moses and Aaron, and under their conduct to remove out of Egypt.

We have examples in the gospel history of the former case, when the working of miracles by our Saviour among the Jews, did not produce FAITH in the persons who were witnesses of them, and therefore had not their proper effect, to convince them of the divine power and authority by which they were wrought. The report or relation of his miracles, by such persons as did not believe, had also no effect on the minds of the people, to persuade them to whom they were confessed by the unbelievers.

The elders, the chief or principal persons of that nation, had evident proof given them by the works our Saviour wrought, that he did act and speak with divine authority; but this they would not believe, because their own reasonings were against it. *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doth many miracles. Why don't we, who are the chief rulers and counsellors of the people, take heed to prevent a delusion spreading among them; for this man doth many miracles, which are manifest to us all, and we cannot deny them: but yet it is impossible he should be our Messiah, or great deliverer, in this mean and despicable condition in which he appears: so that if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; the body of our nation will believe on him, and, taking him for the Messiah, will set him up against the power of the Roman Emperor; and the Romans shall come and take away our place and nation.* By which remarkable words they prophesied against themselves, what was fully accomplished upon rejecting him on whom they ought to have believed, and, by their infidelity, involved their nation in the guilt of his innocent blood.

And one of them, named Caiphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people. To prevent, according to his reasoning,

soning, the ruin of the nation, he advised the most vigorous method to be taken to make away with him at any rate, which the rest of them complied with: *then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

But to go no farther from the present object of our attention, concerning the report of miracles, by persons who had seen them, and yet did not believe; we have another remarkable proof, that their account of them would be also without effect, as appears from the relation we find in the Acts of the holy Apostles.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem; and after examining the Apostles Peter and John, concerning a miracle they had wrought, in healing an impotent man, which they confessed they had done by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it: but when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves; and being thoroughly determined to reject the authority of Jesus, the question was, how to prevent the belief of it from going any farther among the people; to which purpose they conferred together, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But although they could not deny the work, as being witnesses of it, yet their infidelity prevailed in keeping their nation also in unbelief.

The occasion of making these remarks concerning miracles, is taken from the attempts of unbelievers of the late or present time, to destroy the credit or belief of the miracles recorded in the sacred history, especially of those which are mentioned in the New Testament, as wrought by our Lord and his Apostles.

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The design of such men is to undermine the doctrine of the Gospel, by bringing discredit on the miracles which were wrought to introduce it ; by which method of argument they would pass upon us a false insinuation, implying, that we now believe what our Saviour and his Apostles taught, because we first believe the miracles they did to confirm it.

This indeed was true of the first believers, and of the Apostles of our Lord, who were witnesses of his mighty works, and were themselves commissioned to do the like : but the miracles recorded in sacred history are believed, because the doctrine which they were brought to confirm, has been received and believed, and propagated as of divine authority, by believers, from whom we are descended in the true faith of a Christian. So that the evidence given by miracles to the doctrine, which would not at first have been received without them, does now return from the doctrine giving credit to the miracles, in mutual confirmation of the truth and power of God.

If the doctrine of the Gospel had not been received by faith, derived from the mighty works wrought by our Lord and his Apostles, those miracles which accompanied the preaching of it would not now be believed, though the history of them were still in our hands ; and so the resurrection of Christ would not find credit among us, if his religion and his church had not been propagated and founded upon it.

From hence it appears, that the arguments of the deistical writers, to destroy the belief of the miracles which were done by Christ and his Apostles, and to undermine his church and his religion, do thereby make confession to the fact, which proves the miracles of Christ and his Apostles, as the present congregations of the faithful in Christ, who adhere to the Gospel, are derived or descended from those believers who were converted to the faith in Christ, by the miracles wrought by him and his Apostles. So that the labour of such writers or reasoners does revert or fall back upon

upon their hands, and without having done any damage to the Christian cause, resting upon its proper foundation, their works may follow the authors of them into oblivion.

In regard to miracles which are reported by writers who are not acknowledged to have been inspired, we are not called upon, as ministers of the Gospel, either to destroy or to support their credit, unless it interferes with the proper work of our ministry, the defence of revealed truth; but the testimony of such writers lies open to be tried by the same rules, by which all historical evidence is to be examined.

It is to be observed, that the evil spirit was the first worker of a miracle, falsely disguised in the serpent, belying the form and order of nature by his voice, or sign of speech, to the woman; and therefore to support the delusions produced by his false miracle, he must endeavour to destroy the credit of those miracles which were wrought by God, in confirmation of his truth, standing in opposition to the lies of the devil.

It is also remarkable, that by the first miracle given by divine commission unto Moses, his rod was turned into a serpent; the same which, being cast down by the hand of Aaron, swallowed up the rods of the magicians.

To conclude on this subject of miracles, or wonderful works, they are so called in respect to the weakness and obscurity of our apprehensions, concerning the spiritual and invisible power of God: for, in respect to the fullness and sufficiency of his power, all his works are alike miraculous; and therefore to argue with St. Paul, speaking to unbelievers, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* for you can give no reason to shew that it should be more difficult to him to do as he has promised, to raise the dead, than that he should make men able, as we see them, to rise up from their seats, or their beds, to walk.

The

The gift of prophecy, in regard to future events, may be considered as closely connected with the power of working miracles, but under a different respect of address to the persons to whom it is delivered. We have observed of miracles, that they are designed to establish belief of divine authority, residing with that person by whom they are performed, in the minds of the spectators, who have present and sensible conviction of the works; whereas the intention of prophecy is not for the present, but in future time to beget FAITH in those persons, who shall see the events which have been foretold, or the accomplishment of the prophecy.

The word of him who works a miracle, is a prophecy of the immediate interposition of divine power; and the word of prophecy is a miracle declaring the wisdom and power of God in the conduct of future events; the miraculous work, and the knowledge of futurity, being equally superior to the power and wisdom of man.

The prophecies which are handed down to us, being delivered by the inspired writers, were believed by those persons to whom they were first spoken, as having a testimony, either by miracles, or some other external evidence, witnessing to them the inspiration of the prophet; so that the authority of the prophet, as coming from God, being established, the prophecy was at first believed on that account, that is, by the evidence given of his divine inspiration.

That the inspiration of the prophet was sometimes proved by a miracle, we have a remarkable instance of Hezekiah, concerning the message brought to him in his sickness by Isaiah, who confirmed the authority of it, by the shadow returning back ten degrees on the sun-dial of Ahaz.

The completion or fulfilling of prophecy is an evidence of the inspiration of the prophet, to those persons who have lived in times remote from the date or age in which it was delivered, who could not therefore have assurance of the authority of the prophet by the
works

works or miracles he wrought : but when the works or events he foretold are come to pass, they bring the evidence to return back again, in confirmation of the divine mission and authority of the prophet ; and this evidence continues invariable throughout all ages, to which the word of the prophecy does extend, when explained or interpreted by the fulfilling of it.

We may observe in the style of the inspired writers of the New Testament, on their quotation of a prophecy being accomplished by appearance of the event to which it referred, that they speak of the event as come to pass, that the prophetic word MIGHT BE FULFILLED ; because such is the sufficiency of divine power and wisdom, that as a miracle or mighty work did appear, in consequence of the word or sign of God's servant, setting aside the form or usual course of nature, to obey its Creator ; so likewise, in consequence of the word of prophecy, that event must appear which was foretold by divine knowledge should arise in the world, according to the form, or order, or course of human affairs, conducted by the wills of men, subject to the over-ruling Providence of God.

The evidence of divine authority given by miracles and by prophecy, is alike through an appeal to the senses of men, by visible external proof made to convince their understandings of the invisible presence of divine wisdom and power in the government of the world.

From hence it follows, that the argument from prophecy takes place, in order of evidence, before miracles, which are related by the inspired writers to us, who may have sensible proof of the completion of prophecy, which, in regard to miracles, could be given only to them who were present at the works ; and therefore no comparison can be made between the evidence of miracles and that of prophecy, to say that one is greater or less than the other ; but each kind of proof is full and complete in its order of appearance or application : so that after the Apostles and first be-
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lievers were convinced by miracles of that divine truth, to which they were called upon to bear witness, they must chiefly appeal to prophecy, to establish and confirm the future converts to the Christian faith.

This observation explains the words of St. Peter, addressed to Christian believers, whom he assures, that, as to himself, and other Apostles of the Lord, *We have not (says he) followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* That is, our faith was not grounded on the report of other persons persuading us to believe in Christ, by the subtilty of artful and crafty address of human eloquence and invention, *but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, at his transfiguration, which we saw upon the mount, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.* There we had sensible proof given to us both by our eyes and our ears of his majesty; but to support this testimony, given by us for your establishment in the true faith, *we have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed with your own eyes, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,* which discovers the objects to which it is applied, and thereby guides your steps through it, *until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts;* when all doubtfulness and obscurity will be removed by the communication of God's Holy Spirit, *knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, as invented or suggested by private conjecture; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

The like observation does arise concerning prophecy, which has been mentioned in regard to miracles, that the evil spirit was the first author of a prophecy falsely, saying to our first parents, as he has continued to do unto their children, that by complying with his temptation

tation to do according to his will, in following their own wills, opposed to the will of God, *Ye shall be as Gods.* And so the first prophecy of divine authority gives sentence upon the serpent to bruise his head, by recovering the wills of men to their obedience unto the will of God, through the power of our Redeemer, who has destroyed the works and the words of the devil, his miracles and prophecies, and has thereby made a way for us to escape from him and his condemnation, and to return unto God.

It will be proper to observe in this place, that by miracles and prophecy we have proof given by appeal to our senses, to convince our understandings of the divine presence and power in the government of the world, and of the mercy of God in the salvation of mankind, by sending into it our holy Redeemer; and therefore we may be warranted to affirm, in behalf of our religion, that it has been demonstrated; not in the terms and style of the mathematician, *with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power*: in demonstration of the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, and in demonstration of power, in the working of miracles, by the prophets, by our Lord, and by his Apostles, the founders of the Christian church.

To conclude on this head of prophecy, as implying the prescience of Almighty God, his word of prophecy, in regard to us, is miraculous, amazing, and wonderful in its perfection and extent; the consideration of which may excite us with astonishment to cry out with St. Paul, contemplating the most remarkable instance of it,

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out?

In this manner does the Apostle express his admiration of the manifold wisdom of God in his appointment of the means, from the beginning, to accomplish the great work of our salvation, through the conduct of

of the Jewish nation, at first believing, and afterwards rejecting the true faith, until the fulness of the Gentiles being come in, they shall again return unto it.

This manifestation of his wisdom and power is thus spoken of by his prophets, the servants of God, who have declared the certainty of these events by his knowledge of them, as clearly as if they had then been accomplished : for all future actions and movements in the world are present to his view, beholding them in their principles and causes subsisting invariably by his will ; *for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things* ; and therefore no change can happen by surprise to disturb the order of his government : so that when he is pleased to reveal the secrets of it to us, the divine historian looks forwards to relate what is to be ; whereas the historians of human affairs look backwards for the materials of their information, by making enquiry at the end, for what has been done since the beginning, through the records of time past. But the instruction of God to his prophet, to make out the records of the time to come, is, by *declaring the end from the beginning, and from antient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*, making that sure, by his word, which is foretold, as what has been already transacted.

To return unto the history of the Jewish nation, under bondage in Egypt, it comes in our way to be considered, what reflections should be made on the miracles wrought by Moses, and the obstinacy of the Egyptian king refusing to obey the message of God, sent to him for the delivery of his people from their servitude in Egypt.

It appears from the sacred history, that when Moses and Aaron went unto Pharaoh upon this extraordinary occasion, to require an immediate release of the whole people of Israel, that the king did expect they should produce some credentials for that authority which they assumed.

Accordingly, this circumstance was foretold, when *the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh spake unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you, then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.* In consequence of this sign or miracle, performed before him, we are told, that *Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their incantments; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.* And then it is said, according to our translation, *And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said:* whereas it would be, in strict construction of the original Hebrew, that the heart of Pharaoh hardened itself; that is, his imagination suggested, from what passed before him, that notwithstanding he had seen the superiority of Aaron's rod, yet the gods of Egypt, whom he worshipped, who had given him the signs wrought by the magicians, might still be able to save him from the God of the Hebrews, whom he resolved to disobey, by having no regard to his message. And this message was, *Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me;* which being frequently repeated to him, without any intreaty, implied a command coming from a God, superior to the gods of Egypt, whom Pharaoh and his servants worshipped.

From these observations we may be able to account for what God had said, *I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.* As Pharaoh could not, from his own reasonings, discover how it should be, that the God of the Hebrews was more powerful than the gods of the Egyptians, who had the rule and mastery over the Hebrews; he would not therefore be prevailed upon to acknowledge that truth, by all the signs and wonders he saw wrought in the land of Egypt, to convince him of it: for if men are left to their own reasonings

sonings concerning the word or message of God, without having the assistance of his grace, they will reason perversely, and the hardness of their hearts will increase in proportion to the clearness or evidence of that divine authority, with which they are addressed by his servants. Such was the case of Pharaoh, resisting God by his pride, after many dreadful visitations. *As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?* in which obstinacy he continued, until his first-born being slain, his fear compelled him to submit to the authority of that message, though his infidelity still remained, until he perished by it.

It is to be further observed, in regard to the Jewish nation, that as the Lord had said unto them, *Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment*; this promise was accomplished when they were delivered from their servitude under those idolaters, who had dominion over them; and the Israelites had from hence an assurance, that God would also execute judgment against all the gods of those idolatrous nations, whose kingdoms he called upon them to possess.

In considering the account of those remarkable judgments, which were brought upon Egypt at this time, we may be amazed that the effect was not immediately produced, for which they were sent; and from hence be inclined to judge, that Pharaoh was a person of an uncommon degree of obstinacy in pride and perverseness. But this conclusion does arise from the supposition, that we ourselves would have been convinced, and have readily submitted to obey the message of God; not considering that we do believe in God, in whom Pharaoh and his servants did not believe, but only as the God of the Hebrews.

We learn by this example, that the knowledge of the true God, and the faith in him, cannot be propagated by the demonstrations of his power; for these worshippers of idols, or false gods, could not understand, by all the signs and miracles they had seen, *how that the earth is the Lord's*. The plagues which were

brought upon them by the word of Moses, the servant of God, and the exemption of the Israelites from those calamities which oppressed and destroyed the Egyptians in the same land, were not sufficient to convince Pharaoh, that he ought to have forsaken his gods, to believe in the Lord : his own reasonings upon all the wonders which were done, when the powers of the earthly elements were changed or altered before his face, they did not bring him to acknowledge the truth, that the God of the Hebrews was the great governor of all the world, and that he only was to be feared in it.

From hence therefore appears, by this notable example, the insufficiency of that proof or demonstration, which has been attempted, in order to shew us the way to the true God, by the contemplation of his works ; without considering, that his name must be first told and declared to us by his word, and we must look upon him as our God, before we shall argue rightly concerning his works, or the miracles of his power. That is, both Jews and Gentiles must BELIEVE in one God, as St. Paul argues to this purpose, *Is he the God of the Jews only ? is he not of the Gentiles also ? yes, of the Gentiles also :* and by their agreement in this fundamental truth, they must both derive their knowledge of the ONE true God from Abraham, their common father in the faith, in whom, according to God's promises through our Holy Redeemer, *shall all the families of the earth be blessed*, both Jews and Gentiles being called into the true faith by him.

In this way alone we learn by instruction, that there is ONE God ; and no other way can be found, but this which he has appointed, to lead us unto him : on which account our Lord has said of himself, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*, the son of David, the son of Abraham. And to the same purpose St. Paul has said, *He that cometh unto God, must BELIEVE that he is ;* as having no other foundation for knowledge of him, but his FAITH

or belief in those revelations God has made of himself to Abraham, and to his children in the faith, which *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

To conclude our observations upon the miraculous interposition of divine power, in regard to Pharaoh, we learn the occasion of it from what God had said to him, *And indeed for this very cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.*

This translation is accommodated to the Hebrew text by the authority of St. Paul's quotation in his Epistle to the Romans, ix. 17. which, although it does not literally correspond with the Hebrew, does yet perfectly coincide with the meaning of it.

According to the Hebrew text, closely rendered, it would be, *And indeed for this cause I have made thee to stand, that I might make thee see my POWER, and that my NAME may be told in all the earth: which confirms what we have already observed, that, whereas the almighty power of God had been manifested by the miracles he wrought by his servants before the eyes of Pharaoh, who notwithstanding continued obstinate in refusing to obey the God of the Hebrews, as the only true God, from this example it must be acknowledged, that we cannot come to him by arguments drawn from seeing the effects or works of his mighty and irresistible power: and therefore, according to that one only way which he has appointed, we must confess, to the glory of his wisdom and goodness, that we have been taught to know him by means of that nation which was then taken out of the midst of another nation, that his name may be declared, published or preached, throughout all the earth,* *וּלְמַעַן סַפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ* being, in the words of St. Paul, *ὅπως διαγγεῖλη το ὄνομα μου ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ.*

From this example of Pharaoh being hardened by that message which God sent to him, St. Paul takes occasion to obviate an objection, which he foresaw would arise in the minds of some men, against the conduct of Divine

Mercy and Wisdom, in making Pharaoh the instrument of his purposes, by hardening his heart.

The Apostle, after he had quoted the forementioned words, which *the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth*; he adds, as an inference from this declaration, *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will, he hardeneth*. From whence he supposes, that occasion may be taken, to charge the obstinacy or disobedience of a sinner, standing out in rebellion against God's word, to his account who hardens him, and therefore he ought not to complain, if he is not obeyed. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?* The sinner is blameless, if he is hardened by God, on purpose that he may resist or disobey his word.

To give an answer to this unworthy yet a seeming objection to the justice of the divine government, the Apostle addresses his opponent with due resentment of his impotent attempt against the honour of God:

Nay but, O man, who art thou, that thou repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Shall any of us, on dislike of our form or circumstances in this world, presume to say unto him who placed us where we are, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? And is it any more unreasonable, that God, according to his good pleasure, should place such and such men in these or those circumstances of life in this present world, which will be found most suitable to the ends or purposes of his mercy and goodness to it.

So that in regard to Pharaoh, when the Scripture saith to him, *For this same purpose have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth*; the declaration is to this effect, That the Providence of God, by making him
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the King of Egypt, which was subject to him, as the ruler or governor of it, at that time when the people of God were to be removed out of it, gave thereby an opportunity to Pharaoh, following his own will, in opposition to the word of God, to shew his power in him, or to make him see his power, which having no effect to convert him from his obstinacy, in the error of believing in false gods, the deliverance of God's people ensued, by the destruction of Pharaoh and his servants, that the NAME of God might be declared throughout all the earth.

This method of proceeding, according to the divine wisdom, stands clear surely of any objection we can make against the justice of God.

Again, what have we to say, if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known when he thought fit, *endured*, through many ages of the world, *with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath*, that is, the wicked generations of men, by their own evil works, *fitted to destruction*, to be cut off from the earth; and, when it was agreeable to his wisdom, he interposed, *that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy*, on those whom he made the vessels, or the instruments of conveying his mercy to the world, *which he had afore prepared unto glory*, as disposed by their situation and circumstances in this life, to conspire with his design, in shewing forth the glory of his goodness and mercy, *even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles*. And from hence the Apostle proceeds, according to the declarations of the prophets, to assert, that Almighty God, in this act of calling, was under no obligation to regard the persons called, on account of their righteousness; but that it came of his own free grace to make use of them as vessels of mercy, who could make no claim at all to his favour, by any works or merits of their own. *As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people which were not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said*
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unto them, *Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.* By which prophecy it appears, that the Gentiles, who were not called by the NAME of God, and who could make no claim of being beloved, or of being known by him, are, by the free grace and mercy of God, assured by the Prophet, that they shall be called the children of the living God.

But to carry on this argument yet farther, it appears also, in respect of the Jews, that they who had been called the beloved and peculiar people of God, had not, in his sight, any title by their own righteousness to be chosen or to be saved : to which purpose *Esaïas also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved*, out of the general apostacy of that nation, to become vessels of mercy to all nations of the earth : *For he will finish the work*, (λογον, the account, referring to αριθμος, the number) *and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work* (λογον συντλημμενον, a short or concise account) *will the Lord make upon the earth* ; finishing the great design, for which the whole nation of the children of Israel, which was in number as the sand of the sea, had been taken under the divine government, by a remnant that shall be saved ; that is, by a very few persons of that great multitude being chosen, *he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness* of the faith propagated by a small number of that nation, by the ministry of our Lord and his Apostles ; *for a short work (or account) will the Lord make upon the earth* ; teaching men to attain unto righteousness, by a more short or concise account of what was necessary to it, than by seeking after it by works of the law. *And as Esaïas said before, except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed*, (from whence the nation of Israel is to arise again in the true faith) notwithstanding the privileges we enjoyed in being the peculiar people of God ; yet by our transgressions, being fitted for vessels of wrath, *we had*
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been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah, which were utterly destroyed, with all their wicked inhabitants.

What shall we say then ? what conclusions are we to make from hence ? is it not, that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, through the free grace, and gift, and mercy of God ; even the righteousness which is by faith : but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness : Wherefore ? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law ; and by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh justified in his sight ; no man being able to shew, that his obedience was strictly conformable to the terms of the law : yet that nation still persisting to seek after righteousness by the law, they fell from the true faith, for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone, of a SAVIOUR, as necessary to reconcile them unto God, which is according to the declarations of Isaiah concerning them, as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence ; and whosoever believeth in him, shall not be ashamed.

Here the Apostle's argument is concluded, in answer to the objection on which he set out, having vindicated the justice of God from any charge laid against it by the sinner, who would excuse himself by the example of Pharaoh being hardened, which we see is not at all to his purpose.

To make the case yet plainer, by another instance of the Jewish people, who are spoken of by the prophets, as having their eyes blinded, and their hearts hardened by the appointment of God ; we must observe this was no other ways effected by him, but by acting consistently with his promises made to their fathers, and his declarations by the prophets concerning the Messiah, whom the Jews would not acknowledge under that character in which he came, and in which he had been promised, Isa. lix. 20. *The Redeemer shall come to Sion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord ;* or, as St. Paul quotes the words
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of the prophet, *the Deliverer, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* And therefore, when the Prophet Isaiah was commissioned to speak of the Messiah, as clearly as if he were present among them, when the Lord said to him, *Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not ; and see ye indeed, but perceive not ;* this message had no other effect but to *make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.* All the gracious and glorious promises of God, concerning their great Deliverer, were perversely understood by them, in no other light, but as importing some rich tidings of earthly joys and felicities, which they expected from him, according to their gross and sensual apprehensions ; their hearts, and their ears, and their eyes, being intent upon such purposes only as concern their pleasures and prosperity in this world ; they will not embrace a crucified Saviour, *lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed,* by his stripes, from their iniquities, which they have no inclination to part with.

By due consideration of these two eminent instances, of Pharaoh and of the Jewish people being hardened, it appears, that the Apostle's opponent has nothing to reply against God.

But to shew evidently that the mercy of God towards mankind is of his own free grace and gift, without any merit in us, we are told, *That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness,* being altogether strangers to the covenant of promise, and to the law which was given pursuant to it, and they having no pretence to be accounted righteous in the sight of God, whom they had not known, yet these *have attained to righteousness which is by faith,* being called to believe in Christ, when he was rejected by the Jews. Therefore, the inference of the Apostle stands clear in its full force, that, consistently with the truth and holiness and justice of God, he *hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth.*

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The dangerous and perplexing conceits which have arisen about Predestination, and Election, and Reprobation, by eternal decrees of God concerning our future estate of happiness or misery, are derived from mistaken apprehensions of what he has declared in the foregoing passages, and such other parts of Holy Scripture as have a relation and correspondence with them : but we learn, by a close attention to what the Prophet or Apostle has said, that it affords no ground for us to suppose that any man is irrevocably decreed by God to eternal happiness or misery, and, in consequence of that decree, placed in such circumstances or situation in this life, that he may be converted, or hardened, according to such supposed eternal purpose.

The declarations made to us of *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory*, are to be understood as the words clearly signify, that by the TEMPORARY use or application of these vessels in their present FORM of appearance in this world, according to the purposes of divine counsel in the government of it, the wrath and power of God was known ; after he had endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, they were cut off in their wickedness by his judgments on the sinful nations of the earth. *And that he might make known the riches of his glory, by the œconomy or distribution of his mercy to mankind, the execution of this great design was laid on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, by their conditions and stations in this present life, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.*

In the foregoing chapter the Apostle in speaking of these chosen vessels he says, *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did fore-know would be obedient to his call, them he also did predestinate* (προωρίσθη, he first determined or pointed out these persons) *to be conformed to the image of his Son, in his humility and in his sufferings following*

his

his example, *that he might be the first-born among many brethren.* Moreover, *whom he did predestinate, them he also called by the instruction of his word, and whom he called, them he also justified by their faith, and whom he justified by faith, them he also glorified by the trial of their sufferings, being conformed to the image of his son in his humiliation and submission unto death.*

What shall we say then to these things? What conclusions ought we to draw from these discoveries of divine wisdom and counsel? None surely to discourage or to perplex us in our christian course; but, on the contrary, we should from thence entertain the most lively and comfortable hopes of deliverance from all those troubles which surround us in our present state; for If God be for us, who can be against us, to do us any real mischief? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things which conduce to our true happiness? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth us by faith: Who is he that condemneth us by the law? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter) Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, by the merciful support we receive through him who loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We see by these triumphant expressions of our great Apostle, that he lays hold on the doctrine of Predestination delivered by him, as affording an indisputable argument of most powerful comfort and encouragement to bear him up against all the rage and persecution he was to meet with in his christian warfare; and to the same

same purpose it may be successfully applied, with God's assistance, to support all others of his brethren, who may stand under such sort of difficulties as he had to encounter.

The perverse misconstruction of his words alledged to signify, that God has predestinated or decreed such a certain part or number of mankind to eternal happiness, and the rest to eternal misery, to which estates they must respectively attain, howsoever they may propose or resolve to behave themselves; this sort of meaning has no foundation in the words of St. Paul, but has arisen, as it is justly imputed by the article of our church, "From the curiosity of carnal persons lacking the spirit of Christ, and reaching after knowledge which is not revealed, they have thereby given opportunity to the devil to thrust them into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."

To conclude on this head, we may observe, that a proper consideration of what the Apostle has said, will set us free from that false conceit of Predestination, which has been derived chiefly from the very words by which he intended to confute it, upon an absurd, or rather impious, supposition, that he had failed in his attempt through the weakness of his argument, confirming an objection which he designed to remove.

It is fit also we should be cautioned, by the wisdom of our church, to avoid curiosity in searching beyond what is written for our instruction in the Holy Scriptures; for if we attend only to the true design of learning from them to become wise unto salvation, there is nothing said in them concerning this article of Predestination, which can in the least degree disturb or perplex our thoughts.

But to return to our observations on the history of the Jewish people.

The miraculous conduct of divine power in their deliverance, by the dreadful punishments, and the destruction

tion of their enemies, did prepare them for the subsequent methods of that government under which they were to be separated from all nations of the world. To this purpose it is said, Exodus xiv. 30. *And Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.*

The fear of the Lord, and belief in his word, spoken by his servant Moses, did naturally arise from the wonders they had seen in Egypt, and that great work in the Red Sea, and was fit to engage them with a proper disposition of mind to attend to the commands of God, given with awful solemnity from mount Sinai: accordingly we find on the third day preceding this great event of the delivery of the law, that, by way of admonition preparatory to it, the Lord said unto Moses, Exodus xix. 3, 4. *Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself.*

Now therefore, if he will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of PRIESTS and an HOLY NATION. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Here we see the reason of their separation unto the service of the Lord, in preference to all other nations of the earth, is particularly expressed, that they might be a KINGDOM of PRIESTS, and an HOLY NATION, to propagate the true religion, and thereby become a blessing to all the families of the earth.

By this address made unto them, both their hopes and fears were raised to confirm them in obedience to the laws which they were now going to receive from God.

The awful and terrible solemnity of that day on which they were given, is described in suitable majesty of expression in Holy Scripture, Exodus xix. 16.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord, to gaze, and many of them perish.

Exodus XX.

And God spake all these words, saying,

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

By this introduction the Lord repeated again his claim to authority among them, from the manifestation of his power in their deliverance.

I. *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.*

II. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing which is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

III. *Thou*

III. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain : for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.*

IV. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy : six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work ; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates : for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

V. *Honour thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

VI. *Thou shalt not kill.*

VII. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

VIII. *Thou shalt not steal.*

IX. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

X. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbours.*

Under these ten general heads the whole extent of the MORAL LAW is comprehended, which is a compleat system of instruction, commanding the observance of those duties, upon which the welfare of the whole body of individuals united in society does invariably depend.

This moral law is the LAW OF NATURE, adapted by divine authority to the nature or constitution of man in his present state, searching after his happiness upon the principle of acting by his own will, regarding the objects of his senses exercised on outward visible things : accordingly the sanctions of this LAW are derived from the pleasures and pains of sense, from that KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL which we are capable of receiving by temporal rewards and punishments in the prosperity or adversity of this world.

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With respect to the objects of this law, it is divided into two parts or tables.

The first table containing four several heads of duty towards God the lawgiver, requires the observation of them in acknowledgment of his supreme authority and power.

In the first commandment, by forbidding them to have other Gods before him, he requires their belief in one God.

The second commandment, by forbidding the worship of God by any image or visible form, implies a declaration of his spiritual and invisible nature, and also restrains the human mind from its habitual weakness of conceiving and attributing power to the FORMS through ignorance and inattention to the invisible and spiritual power of God. The sanction added to this law enforces the observance of it, by a declaration of jealousy for the invasion of his honour, to guard against the propensity of mankind to worship visible objects, and to commit that iniquity or idolatry by which they are accounted haters of God, and for which he has threatened them with punishment in their posterity to the third and fourth generation, which may import so long as they shall live to see their descendants; as, on the other hand, the faithful are encouraged in their obedience to it, by the promise of a blessing to thousands of their generations.

The third commandment, by forbidding the name of God to be dishonoured, requires awe and veneration towards him, whensoever his sacred name is mentioned in discourse, but more especially by an oath.

The fourth commandment prescribes a division of time, of which a seventh part is sacred for the service of God, and separated by it from the rest, which may be employed in those labours which are requisite to the support of our present state. The reason alledged for this particular designation of the seventh day, suggests the strongest motive to religious worship which could

then be offered, it being founded in an obligation to obey the great Lord and Creator of all the world.

The fifth commandment, which is the first of the second table, establishes the order of society, by commanding honour to be given to the natural parents, who are representatives, in their own families, of the heads, governors, or magistrates, in the greater family or community taken in one view, and considered at large under the laws or bands of its union: and all the duties of the second table being essentially connected with the observation of this order in society, the establishment and duration of the Jewish state is suspended upon it, by the sanction which is added to this commandment, *that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

The sixth commandment, by forbidding all violence to the person of our neighbour, implies an obligation to love and to assist him.

The seventh commandment, by prohibiting adultery, requires chastity and purity of manners.

The eighth commandment, by forbidding all unjust seizure of what belongs to another, establishes a right in possession of lawful acquisitions by industry, which is encouraged by it.

The ninth commandment, which forbids lies and falsehood to the prejudice of our neighbour, does of course require truth and sincerity in all our dealings with him.

The tenth commandment, by regarding the inward motions of the heart, and regulating its affections, secures the observance of all the rest in this table; and, by a due connection, opens the way for receiving the more perfect morality of the gospel.

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. After this it follows, that the people stood afar off, and

and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was, as he was commanded, that he might receive, by application to particular cases, an explanation of the moral law, to enforce and preserve the form and order of society, and also to obtain those laws relating to divine service, which were suitable to that constitution of the Jewish state, and for regulating the external acts, forms, or ceremonies of their behaviour, with respect to the time, and the place, and the persons, and the manner to be observed, in attending and performing the worship of God.

Upon a view of the whole system of *the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments*, given by divine appointment to this people, we have abundant evidence to conclude, that the happiness and duration of their state was provided for by the most wise and effectual means that could be prescribed; and their preservation, as a peculiar people, distinct from all other nations of the earth, was secured by their knowledge and worship of ONE God, according to rites of his own appointment.

Hence it was that the servant of God, contemplating with admiration the mighty privileges they enjoyed, addressed them with becoming zeal for their welfare, Deut. iv. 5. *Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.*

Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons sons:

Specially the day that thou stoodst before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

And ye came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice.

And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

That this exhortation of Moses might make the greater impression upon their minds, and that no motive he could suggest might be wanting to confirm them in obedience unto God, before he spake the words now repeated, he puts them in mind of what they owed to himself out of gratitude for his care and tenderness of them: and takes this opportunity to relate particularly what he was to suffer, and the reproof he met with for their sakes; for when he had with earnest supplication entreated the Lord that he might enter along with them into the promised land, his request was rejected in the manner he recounts it to them.

And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?

I pray thee let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.

But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter.

And before Moses concluded his exhortation, he repeated again almost the same words;

Furthermore,

Furibermore, the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land. Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

From hence he proceeds to warn them, by a prophetic declaration, of those calamities which would befall them by their disobedience, in making and in worshipping of idols.

When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and shalt have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger; I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it: ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you.

And there ye shall serve gods, the work of mens hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware unto them. For ask now of the days

that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord be is God; there is none else beside him.

Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire, and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight, with his mighty power out of Egypt: to drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.

Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever.

If we add to this exhortation of Moses, the blessings which were promised to their obedience, and the curses which were threatened upon their transgression of the law, as we find them expressed in Chap. xxviii. of this most excellent book of Deuteronomy, it must be acknowledged, that the Israelites did receive the law with all advantages that could be given along with it, to enforce the supreme authority of God, the law-giver, and to support and encourage them in the discharge of
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their duty, by certain assurances of temporal happiness and prosperity consequent upon it.

It does not come within the compass of this undertaking to open a view of the providential history of mankind, to be more particular in observation of the manner by which the nation of Israel was conducted and miraculously supported, under the guidance of divine power, from the time they left Egypt, through the space of forty years, in the wilderness of Sinai, until they came into possession of their inheritance in Canaan : but by their continuance so long time in that journey, it is obviously suggested, that the whole body of this people being kept together for so many years, their law-giver had thereby the most favourable opportunity for their instruction in the commandments and statutes by which they were to be governed in future times.

It appears likewise, while they journeyed in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, the great event of the delivery of the law must have been continually in their thoughts and discourses, and thereby strongly impressed upon their minds ; and the example of that generation which perished in the wilderness, who were cut off by their unbelief from entering into the promised land, was given to their children as a warning, to keep them from distrust in the promises of God, that they might teach their children also to believe in him, and to fear him throughout all future generations.

S E C T. V.

BEFORE we proceed to examine the sacred history of the Jewish nation, under the several periods of its government, according to the moral law, or the law of nature, it may be useful to observe what approaches might be made by other nations of the world towards that perfection of civil government, with which the Jews had been peculiarly blessed.

That principle, upon which the moral law was established, the knowledge of good and evil by our senses, is common to all mankind; and the desire of happiness in this life, arising from the gratifications of the several appetites and passions of human nature, is universally found among all orders or conditions of men throughout the earth. Accordingly, the various plans or forms of government, which have been contrived by the law-givers, or founders of society, in the different regions of the world, do all agree in this design, of providing for the temporal happiness of the members of society, by preserving their order, and uniting their powers for mutual services, to procure the comforts of this life, and to prevent the evils of it: and the sanctions of all their laws are derived from the common principle of knowledge or experience of the pleasures and pains of sense.

Upon this account it is, that the Law of Nature, delivered by divine revelation to the Jews, did correspond with the laws of society, established in the Gentile world; for the law, both of the Jew and the Gentile, did aim at the temporal happiness of mankind, and were supported on the same principle or sanction of temporal rewards and punishments.

From hence a conformity did arise between the Gentile and Jewish commonwealths; and the Gentiles, in reasoning upon the same principle, to promote the peace and welfare of society, did agree to the principal articles of the law of nature, by establishing such rules as were necessary to maintain the order of society, and to prevent murder, adultery, and theft, and such other crimes as, by the experience of mankind, are acknowledged to be inconsistent with the happiness of men united in communities. Therefore, upon consideration of the Jew and Gentile being subject to judgment in a future state, as revealed by the Gospel, we are to conclude, they will both be judged, and acquitted or condemned according to their behaviour in observing or transgressing the moral law, or the laws of society.

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For as many as have sinned without law, revealed or enforced upon them by divine authority, they shall also perish without law, by a sentence or judgment agreeable to the information or conviction of their own minds, concerning their behaviour in their respective relations and circumstances in this life. And as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law they have received by divine authority; for not the bearers of the law are just before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified. And so it may be, that many persons of the heathen world, who have not received the LAW of NATURE as the Jews did, by divine revelation, may notwithstanding be approved for living according to the end or purposes of it, in preference to the Jews, who were hearers of the law, but not doers of it. *For when the Gentiles which have not the law (revealed), do by nature the things contained in the law; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*

The laws of society in the respective governments of heathen nations, being designed to promote and secure the happiness of this present life, they agree in this design with the law of the Jews; so that the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in that law of revelation; and these having not that law, are a law unto themselves, by obligations derived from considering themselves as members of society, united for mutual happiness and support; which shew the work of the Jewish law (being intended for these purposes also) written in the hearts of the Gentiles, naturally disposed and inclined to secure the happiness of this life, which is the work of the revealed law of nature. And so far as the Gentiles pursue this end, by conformity of their actions to the general rules established for the welfare of society, their own minds will approve their behaviour: as, on the contrary, by offending against the laws of society, they will condemn themselves,

selves ; or, according to the Apostle, they will pronounce sentence upon themselves, *their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*

As the main design in view throughout the constitutions of the governments of the heathen nations, was to support the order and well-being of society, or a number of individuals, taken collectively or in one body ; it follows, that such crimes only would be forbidden by the authority, and punishable by the laws of human appointment, as appear, by direct or open purpose of action, to have an influence to disturb or injure the peace of society : but in regard to the inward disorder, or evil purpose of a sinful heart, it must escape the condemnation of a human tribunal, until the intention breaks forth into an act. So that on this account particularly there was a degree of perfection in the Jewish law, which could not be found in the laws of heathen nations ; and the Jew might become an offender in that respect, for which a Gentile would not condemn himself. Whence it is that St. Paul, as a Jew, speaking of himself to this purpose, says, *I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

The same observation will lead us to account for the diversity of laws among the several nations of the world, as arising from the different views which have been presented to their respective law-givers, or founders of society, when they considered the situation, and circumstances, and the temper of the people who were to be governed by them. From whence also it did proceed, that some acts were allowed in one country or kingdom, which were forbidden by the laws of another. So it was, that the permission of theft was not judged inconsistent with the welfare of a state, where it was deemed most adviseable, that all its members should be inured to a watchful, hardy, and laborious course of life, and to be satisfied with such accommodations as
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were not likely to tempt the appetite of one man to disturb another.

For the like reason the laws relating to marriage differed in the heathen nations, according to the temper of the people among whom they were established.

It is obvious also, from considerations respecting the temporal welfare of the people, that the laws of the same society must vary, according to the wealth or the poverty, the strength or the weakness, of itself or of its neighbours.

But the greatest difference between the laws of the Gentile communities, and the Law of Nature, given to the Jews by divine revelation, did arise from the difference of that authority with which they were respectively promulgated.

Among heathen nations the authority of the law was derived from the power of the state; and the observance of it was enforced by penalties proportioned to the acts of disobedience, according to the judgment of the state, or of persons delegated by it. In both these respects their political constitutions were liable to great defects; as an offender might come to be so powerful, as to despise the authority of the community, and the judgment of it upon crimes committed against its authority would be subject to error, from the difficulty of obtaining proper evidence or attestation of the truth, when the witnesses, by private interest, might be engaged to conceal it.

For remedy of these defects in the constitution of the state, the power of conscience was called in, which was supported by such principles of religion as were peculiar to the different nations or societies of men dispersed over the earth.

It is not to be doubted, that a general tradition was handed down among mankind concerning a future state, which was implied in the great promise or prophecy delivered to our first parents, after their transgression. That this tradition did descend from them,
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the general use of sacrifices appears to bear witness, when they are considered to be of divine institution, at the time and upon the occasion of cloathing our first parents with the skins of animals; for this was an act of God's mercy towards them, immediately consequent to that great promise he had made to them, as we have already observed. So that the hope of a recovery from death, by the promise of the Redeemer, and the rite of sacrificing by divine institution, came both in together, for the comfort of the fallen race of mankind, and accordingly have traditionally descended together among them.

Upon this foundation of a tradition, the hope of another life may justly be supposed to have spread thro' all nations of the earth; and, after this hope was embraced, many arguments might be suggested to strengthen it, by the reasonings of mankind concerning the imperfections of their present condition, and the miseries to which the best men, or most useful members of society, may be exposed, through the unequal and unsteady distribution of human affairs, according to the wills and counsels of men.

Upon these considerations, the defects of human political institutions being apparent, they did require the aid of religious institutions, to bind men by conscience, through a belief of a future account, to conspire in their endeavours to promote and secure the happiness of one another in this present life. Therefore the law-givers among the Gentiles were careful also in appointment of religious ceremonies for the worship of their gods, and the chief magistracy and priesthood were often united in the same person.

It is not then without reason, that the libertines of these times have been bold to affirm, that religion has been owing to priestcraft, and that the law-givers did introduce superstitious fears and apprehensions of a future judgment: for if the sum of religion is supposed to consist in the discharge of the moral or social duties, by which we promote the happiness of each other in
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this present life, to the utmost we are able, agreeably to the appetites and desires of our nature ; and that our actions, directed according to this rule, will be approved and rewarded by the supreme Governor of the world ; there is no doubt, but the several law-givers of the Gentile world, in pursuing this plan, did invent and support the various forms of false worship, addressed to fabulous divinities, which were embraced by the idolatrous nations of the earth.

But by making this confession of the discernment of the Moralists, Deists, or Libertines of the present or latter times, we do not give up any point to the prejudice of revealed religion : on the contrary, by allowing them to the utmost all concessions which, in truth, they have a right to demand, their cause will be effectually overturned.

The constitution of the Jewish commonwealth was exempted from those imperfections which naturally arose in all governments which were framed by human policy. It had the same principle in common with them, to influence the actions of all the members of it, by the prospect of happiness in this life, through the enjoyment of whatever was agreeable to the present appetites and desires of our nature ; but it differed from them chiefly in these four particulars :

1st. In the supreme unchangeable authority of God, their law-giver.

2dly. With respect to the system or body of their laws, which was compleated upon the first formation of their state, and did admit of no addition or diminution, according to the instructions given by Moses, *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I commanded you.*

3dly. With regard to the sanctions of their law, in the certainty and assurance given by divine authority, that the temporal happiness of the whole nation, and
of

of each individual also, would invariably ensue from the due observance of the laws and commandments of God, and that the breach or neglect of them would be attended with inevitable punishment: for which purpose we may observe, in the form of delivery, that the commandments are addressed to each individual of that nation, who was instructed to expect his own private happiness, and the welfare of his children, in consequence of his obedience to them.

4thly. As the perfection given to the law of nature, by the authority, and wisdom, and power of God, the law-giver, did remove from it the defects and necessities which arose in human governments, for remedy whereof the belief of a future state had been encouraged and maintained in the Gentile world, this article of faith was not introduced to support the law of nature: for the happiness of this life being the end of obedience to the law, this end was insured, upon that condition, to the peculiar people of God, by his immediate authority and promise. And therefore under that dispensation it was not necessary, nor suitable to the wisdom of the Great Law-giver, to teach men to expect happiness in a future state, that they might be inclined to make one another happy, according to the course of this present world, by the comforts and enjoyments of sensual things.

By considering the advantages which the Jewish nation enjoyed in these respects, by the peculiar constitution of their state, we have reason to conclude there was no motive wanting, that could have been added, to influence their wills to be conformable to the moral law in the practice of their duty. So that by comparing the condition of the nation of Israel with the state of the Gentile or Heathen nations, we may see good cause for the answer given by St. Paul to that question, *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way, in regard to their security and welfare in this present state; but chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God.*
They

They were intrusted with the keeping of his word, and of his promises made to all mankind, from whence the Jews had instruction in the design and purposes of his mercy to bestow greater things upon them, than what concerned their worldly estate, by making the seed or children of Abraham the instruments of a blessing to all nations of the earth.

It will be proper here also to observe, that as the civil and ecclesiastical constitutions of the nation of Israel were both derived from the same authority, the form of divine worship, commanded by the ordinances of the ceremonial law, did correspond with the moral law, and was intended to separate the Jewish people, as worshippers of the true God, from all heathen or idolatrous nations of the earth.

To shew the conformity of the ceremonial with the moral law, it is to be remembered, that the happiness of this life was the end proposed for obedience to the moral law, which end was to be obtained by the members of that society to whom the law was given, by their performing such works or services to each other as the necessities of this present state do require for the gratification of the several appetites and desires of our nature; that is, by ordering their actions and outward behaviour agreeably to the terms of the law, in discharge of moral, relative, or social duties; so that, *touching the righteousness which is in the law*, a man was blameless, when he did walk by sight; blameless in the observation of his family, his fellow-citizens, or his neighbours, who could not reproach him for any failure in his duty or behaviour towards them.

And therefore, as the observance of the moral law was judged of by a conformity to the principle of walking by sight, the ceremonial law, which directed the form and order of divine worship, in the various acts of outward or external services, in sacrifices, oblations, washings, and purifications and festival solemnities; it was consistent also with the principle of walking by sight,

fight, by which the Israelites, and all converts to their religion, were judged.

But such and so numerous were these ordinances and ceremonies, that, when taken all together, they made up a yoke, which St. Peter says, as one of the Jewish nation, *neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*; that is, without frequent transgressions, and thereby becoming liable to the sentence of condemnation by the law.

Again, That the children of Israel might not be tempted to comply with the customs of heathen nations in worshipping their idols or false Gods, they were taught by Moses, from divine authority, to worship God, by observing a law of his own appointment; and, from the order, solemnity, and magnificence, which did appear throughout the whole course of the ordinances of divine service, Moses had occasion to observe to them how much they were exalted, in these respects, above all other nations of the earth, *For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day?* And therefore as they did excel all other people of the earth in the peculiar privileges of having God so nigh unto them, that his divine presence was manifested in their tabernacle, and afterwards in their temple; and that, according to rites of his own appointment, he was to be served in great splendor and magnificence; so that the whole garb of their religion, in the service, and furniture, and utensils of the tabernacle, and of the temple, did correspond to the holy garments of Aaron, which were made for glory and for beauty; by these circumstances it was provided, that they might not be tempted or drawn aside to idolatry, by the pompous shews of Heathen or Gentile worship.

To conclude upon this head, we see that in preference to all other nations of the earth, this peculiar people

ple enjoyed the LIGHT of NATURE, by knowing the true God who had revealed his NAME to them, and his Will concerning the form of worship which he required; and they were blessed also with a form of civil government giving perfection to the LAW of NATURE.

Upon these accounts it may be supposed that Moses was commanded to *put into the breast-plate of judgment; the Urim and the Thummim*; that is, a label inscribed with the words Urim and Thummim: the former signifying the Light of the truth afforded by revelation to that people, and the latter the Perfection of that law or constitution by which the twelve tribes were incorporated, whose names were engraven in the stones of the breast-plate; and so long as the people of Israel continued in worshipping only the true God, and in observing that law, which was the band of their society or union, they had a right by the appointment of God to consult him by the breast-plate of judgment; that is, by the address of the high priest wearing the breast-plate before the mercy-seat, to receive judgment by a voice from the divine presence.

From hence we see the importance of the blessing given by Moses to the tribe of Levi, *Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One*;—that God might always be pleased to continue in that tribe this mighty privilege of approaching to him for judgment, which implied a continuation of the prosperity, and the perpetual establishment of the state and nation of Israel.

To return to the sacred history of the people of God.

In prosecution of this design, which is now under our view, for a discovery of the connection between the conduct of divine providence respecting the peculiar state of that people, and the general providential history of all mankind, it will not be necessary for this purpose to observe the steps that were taken, by the command of God given unto Joshua, for the effecting his miraculous success in making war against the nations of the Canaanites, to dispossess and to destroy them

from off that land, which, according to divine promise, was to be the inheritance of the children of Israel.

With respect to this part of their history it may be sufficient to remark, that they were settled by the appointment of God in that country, because it afforded a situation the most convenient for the purposes which were to be accomplished in the government of this people, that the mercy and the judgments of God manifested towards them might from thence be the more easily published and declared to all other nations and countries of the earth; from whence it is that the prophet Ezekiel hath taken notice of this circumstance: *Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem; I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her; and then he proceeds to make up a charge of wickedness and transgressions committed by the nation of Israel, surpassing the iniquities of the heathen nations; And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her; for they have refused my judgments and my statutes; they have not walked in them. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you: therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.*

It may be proper here also to observe, that the vengeance of God executed upon the corrupted idolatrous nations of the Canaanites, became exemplary to the Israelites, who were informed by divine authority upon what account the inhabitants of that land were to be utterly destroyed and cast out of it; for after those nations are charged with being guilty of many abominations which are particularly mentioned in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus, it follows, for instruction to the Israelites, *Defile not you yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you.*

you. *And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you; (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled) that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.*

This account corresponds to what had been said to Abraham, when that land was promised to him for the inheritance of his children, who were not to succeed to it until the fourth generation after his decease, when the time of God's forbearance with those wicked nations was expired, which is alledged to him as the reason of this delay; *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* As by the righteous persons who lived and conversed among them, by Abraham, and Lot, and Melchizedek, and by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, they had warning of the judgments of God coming upon them, and yet were not reclaimed; they were at length finally given up to be destroyed by the hand of the Israelites, under the conduct of Joshua, the servant of the Lord.

The same lesson of instruction should have been taken and considered by the nations, the inhabitants of the countries round about Canaan; for the miraculous successes granted to the Israelites against their enemies were subject to their observation; which however had no effect to teach them to fear, or to confess the almighty power of the God of Israel; so that the example afforded by the people of God, while they continued under the dispensation of the law, was fruitless, being insufficient for the accomplishment of the great purpose of converting the heathen nations to the knowledge of the true God from the worship of idols; for they gave little heed or attention to his dealings with that people; and although the divine wisdom and power was manifested in the constitution of their church

and state, yet the perverse Wills, both of the Jews and Gentiles, were bent in opposition to the designs and counsels of the providential mercies of God.

It is to be observed in the book of Joshua, that, before his death, he does in a most solemn manner give commandment, by divine authority, concerning the future behaviour of the children of Israel, towards the remnant of those idolatrous nations which were yet in the land; he lived so long after their entrance into Canaan, that all the different nations of its inhabitants were so far subdued, as to make no attempt of standing in any considerable body for their defence, to dispute their possessions with the Israelites. But notwithstanding the conquests that had been made, great numbers of that people still remained in the land; and it did require time and perseverance in the work of dispossessing and driving them out of the many towns and villages which they occupied, after that the Israelites were acknowledged by them as their Lords, which was when they found it impracticable by open force to make opposition against them. Their wise and faithful commander gave them warning concerning these circumstances before his decease, by a prophetic declaration of the future consequences that would arise from any compact or agreement they should make with the remnant of the Canaanites who were then left in the land. And this account we have in the twenty-third chapter of the book of Joshua here transcribed.

And it came to pass, a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age: And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age: And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations, because of you: for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you. Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

And

And the Lord your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you.

Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; that ye come not among these nations, these that remain amongst you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: but cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day. For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else, if ye do in any wise go back and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you; know for a certainty, that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

After this declaration was made by Joshua, that he might enforce the due consequences of it upon the minds of the people, he took another opportunity of calling them together for this purpose, and, by a discourse directed to all the principal persons of the tribes of Israel assembled together in the presence of God, after recounting their wonderful obligations to him, he obtained, in exchange from them, the most solemn assurances of their invariable perseverance in the fear and worship of God.

This important transaction we have recorded in the following words of the twenty-fourth chapter of the same book.

And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

And Joshua said unto the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did amongst them: and afterward I brought you out. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea. And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them: and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you.

Then

Then Balack, the son of Zippor king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: But I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I delivered them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwelt in them: of the vine-yards, and olive-yards, which ye planted not, do ye eat.

Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up, and our fathers out of the Land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins. If ye forsake the

Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him: and they said, We are witnesses.

Now therefore put away, (said he) the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute, and an ordinance in Shechem.

And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

Notwithstanding the earnest entreaties which were made by Joshua, and the cautions he gave to the children of Israel, at that time when he might expect they would be most affected by his fatherly tenderness and concern for their welfare, which was a little before his decease and departure from among them; yet in respect to that thing of which he had most especially reminded them, as concerning their behaviour towards the remnant of those idolatrous nations of Canaan, they provoked God by their disobedience to his commands, in disregard of their solemn professions, and of their repeated promises given to his servant.

To this purpose it is related in the succeeding book of the sacred history, Judges i. that the several tribes, therein mentioned, did not drive out the Canaanitish inhabitants from the lands of their inheritance; but it appears

appears that the heads of the tribes, instead of dividing the land as they ought to have done among their brethren, chose through covetousness to consent, that great numbers of the people of those idolatrous nations should occupy many of their towns and villages, to be under their subjection, and to pay them taxes or tribute for them : of this transgression we find they are accused by a messenger sent from God unto them for this purpose, Judges ii.

And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land, you shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this?

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you: but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

Accordingly it follows: And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took of their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and the groves.

Hence it was, that by joining in alliances of marriage with these nations, by partaking in their feasts, and by seeing the worship paid by them to their gods, the Israelites were ensnared to worship Baalim and the groves, and so to become idolaters with the Canaanites; and thus their rebellion and their apostacy gave occasion to the servitude and oppressions they laboured under for many succeeding generations; for it came to pass in like manner, that as for the sake of gain they had consented to retain as servants or tributaries the residue of the several nations of the Amorites, so it fared with themselves in recompence to the justice of God for their covetousness; he sold them into the hands of their enemies,

enemies, as we find it expressed in the sacred text, *The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.* And after their deliverances by Othniel and Ehud, they relapsed into rebellion and idolatry; for so it follows; *And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead, and the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan.*

The book of Judges, from whence these quotations are taken, contains little more of importance to be observed in the history of the nation of Israel, but what relates to the consequences of their infidelity, which is assigned for the cause of their subjection and servitude under the oppressive power of their neighbours, of the Midianites, Ammonites, and Philistines; and when it pleased God to have compassion upon them for the cruel treatment they met with from their enemies, after they had repented of their wickedness and idolatry, and returned to his worship only, he raised up for them judges or saviours, after the example of Joshua, to go out before them against their enemies.

Their deliverances upon these occasions were evidently brought about by the miraculous interposition of divine power in their favour; from whence it came to pass, that in those days every generation of the Israelites had proof before their own eyes of the almighty power of God being concerned in their protection and government, and thereby a corresponding attestation was given to the mighty works which, their fathers had told them, were wrought by the hands of Moses and Joshua for their settlement in the land of Canaan.

It is to be observed, that in this book of the Judges, besides the frequent relapses into idolatry, there are some enormous instances of wickedness mentioned, and one particularly, in which almost the whole nation of Israel was concerned, which was in the matter relating to the Levite's concubine: his resentment on that occasion of her abuse and death, was expressed in the manner

manner most suitable to inflame the minds of an unruly ungoverned multitude, and thereby, having its full effect, did produce those horrid acts of cruelty which went near to destroy the whole tribe of Benjamin, of whom there fell upwards of twenty-five thousand men in this shameful quarrel, after that they had slain forty thousand of the other tribes of Israel.

It is added, in the conclusion of this book of the Judges, that *in these days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

The same words had been repeated twice before, and they seem to refer to the whole time comprehended in the history of this book, and thereby to assign a cause of those disorders which are mentioned in it: so that the meaning of them is to this purpose; the licentiousness of the people was great in those days, notwithstanding they had the law of God, or the law of nature under his authority, to direct them; yet every man continued to do that which was right in his own eyes, following his own will, in opposition to the will of God.

From the form of the commonwealth of Israel in these days, there does arise a proof of the insufficiency of the law of nature to prevent even the most flagrant instances of violence and disorder in society; and therefore another remedy was sought for, in the establishment of political œconomy, by the civil power being delegated to a king, or a chief magistrate, and exercised under him by subordinate or inferior officers of the state.

In the first book of Samuel, who was the last of the prophetic and national judges of Israel, we are informed of the steps which were taken by that people to introduce a change in the form of their government. They took occasion of making complaint to Samuel for this purpose, from the corrupt manners of his sons, whom he had appointed his assistants, to hear and determine the controversies of the people.

And

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of the first-born was Joel, and the name of the second Abiah : they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways ; now make us a king, to judge us like all the nations.

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us ; and Samuel prayed unto the Lord.

It is to be remarked in this address made to Samuel by the elders of Israel, that they pretend the chief cause of it did arise from Samuel's age, and inability to discharge, in his own person, the burthensome duty of his office ; and that his sons, being wicked and unfaithful persons, were not qualified for it. In answer to this pretext, after Samuel had prayed unto the Lord, *The Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee ; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

It was not for any faults they could find, either in Samuel or his sons, that their minds were determined in this matter ; for in that case they would only have desired a change for other persons to be continued under the same divine or prophetic authority, with which their judges were invested : but the true cause is discovered by the directions they give to Samuel ; *Now make us a king, to judge us like all the nations.*

They desired to be like their neighbouring nations, under the government of a king, attended with ensigns of power and sovereign authority ; such as were not to be seen about the persons of their judges.

Upon this account the Lord said, *They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* Instead of that authority which is derived from me, and conferred by my designation of persons to rule and judge them in

my

my name, they desire to have a king set over them, with an authority derived from the command of the temporal power of their state, *like all the nations*. Then it follows, *According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods ; so do they also unto thee.*

By their joining in alliances with the idolatrous nations of the land, they proceeded in rebellion and apostacy, to join with them also in serving other gods ; and being often cast off on this account into the hands of their enemies, who did grievously oppress them, they laboured under domestic troubles through their own wickedness : yet, instead of returning unto their God, and supplicating for his pardon and protection against their enemies, they sought for another method of relief and security ; and, in opposition to the remonstrances made by Samuel, they did insist upon their purpose ; *Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*

To convince them of their folly in this request, Samuel is commanded to shew them *the manner of the king that shall reign over them*, by telling them the consequences that would arise from the power intrusted to him of commanding their persons and services, and the right he must obtain over their possessions. And again, Samuel, soon after this transaction, does appeal to their own testimony of his behaviour among them ; whether they had any thing to charge him with, in regard to covetousness or corruption in the discharge of his office ; and, by their acquittal of him, he obtains a confession in behalf of himself, as their judge by the appointment of God, that there was no blame to be laid upon him, why they should have desired a change in the form of their government, and have presumptuously demanded a king.

In the constitution of the government of the Israelites, under that body of laws which were given them
by

by divine authority, their obedience to them was required upon this account, that all the laws, and statutes, and judgments, for the preservation of their state, were made, ordained, and declared by God, their supreme law-giver : from whence it is, that in the act of publication, notifying his commands to that people, to preserve their continual attention and respect to his authority, it is frequently added, *I am the Lord thy God.*

Their desire of having a king set over them *like all the nations*, did imply an attempt against the authority of God, their law-giver ; for a king, like the kings of all the nations, would require obedience to the laws of the state, by virtue of his own authority, under the sanction of temporal power placed in his hands, to reward or punish according to his own will. By setting up a king of this sort, the divine law would have been abrogated ; that is, it would have had no force in calling them to observance of it, any farther than as it pleased the king to enjoin it by his authority.

But as the people did not presume of themselves to set a king over them, but applied to Samuel, the servant of God, to make choice of a king on their behalf, God was pleased to command him to hearken to their request, and directs him also to the choice of a person to reign over his people ; from whence, according to divine counsel, although the external form of their government was changed, yet the internal constitution of it remained unshaken.

The supreme authority of God over the whole nation was still preserved ; the king was chosen by his appointment, who made it known to him by his prophet, that his commission and authority was from the hand of God, and that he must observe his laws in governing his people according to them. And they also are informed by the prophet, that their obedience must be given to the laws of God only, as we find in the words of Samuel, addressing them for this purpose.

And

And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: (ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn ye not aside; for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain). For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great NAME's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way. ONLY fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

As the desire of having a king set over them did proceed from the people, it pleased God to chuse such a king for them, as they would have chosen for themselves: for as they judged that the external shew of the power and attendance given to the person of their king, would contribute to preserve domestic peace and order in the state, and to unite them also more firmly to fight their battles against their enemies; there could be no doubt, but in fixing upon a governor and captain for this purpose, they would have principal regard to the qualities of his personal courage, to his stature and outward appearance, with consideration also of the family of which he was descended. To all these particulars there was respect had in the choice of Saul, the first King of Israel, as we are informed by the sacred historian, who speaks of him to this purpose.

S E C T. VI.

NOW there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Apiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among
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the children of Israel a goodlier person than he : from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

So that in a full assembly of the people, called together upon this account by Samuel, to declare to them publicly the election of Saul, he had a joyful testimony of their approbation given to him, upon his appearance among them, as we are told upon this occasion, that when Saul stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from the shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the King.

The success of this choice of Saul to be king over the nation of Israel, did correspond to the motives upon which it was made acceptable to the people; for upon occasion of approaching danger from their enemies, who were gathered in great numbers against them, their courage failed them in their extremity, and was not at all increased, as they at first did suppose it might be, by the presence of their king going before them to fight their battles. On this account of their timidity and dispersion, Saul ventured to transgress the commandment of God, by invading the office of the priesthood; for so we are told in the course of the sacred history.

Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

And all Israel heard say, that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was bad in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal; and all the people followed him trembling.

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings.

And he offered the burnt-offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together to Michmash; therefore, said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.

It appears from the account of this transaction, that the majestic presence of Saul, and the reputation of valour which he had acquired, did not produce those effects among the Israelites, which they had expected, by having these advantages before them in the person of their king. They were now left in the hands of their own counsel, which had devised this method of government, as affording greater security to their state, both in time of peace and war, than what they had formerly

merly experienced, when persons were raised up occasionally, by divine appointment, as judges to determine their civil controversies, and as saviours to lead them against their enemies.

The deliverances which had been wrought for them under the conduct of their judges, were miraculously accomplished, by the spirit and resolution of their enemies being broken, through their apprehension and experience of the mighty power of the God of Israel, against whom they were contending, when the people of God were led on by his captains or judges, acting under his authority by divine commission.

How shall one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight?

This question is answered by Moses, who accounts for it through the undaunted courage and confidence of the Israelites in their rock, and by the consciousness and timidity of their enemies, as inferior to them, thro' the guidance of divine power and protection.

For their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges,

In exchange for this confidence which arose in their minds, when they knew they were led on by divine command, they had now before their eyes the person of their king, invested with the power and authority of the state, which accordingly he did exert upon this occasion with suitable solemnity.

For Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

And all Israel heard say, that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was bad in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were gathered together after Saul to Gilgal.

In consequence of this exploit done by Jonathan, there was more than ordinary preparation made by the Philistines, for revenging themselves upon the Israelites. A multitude of chariots and horsemen, and people as
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the sand of the sea-shore were gathered together, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven. When the men of Israel saw that, they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed), they laboured under great anxieties of fear and doubtfulness about their condition; and therefore, instead of being courageous, as they used to be when the Lord sent forth captains of his own designation before them, *The people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.* They who remained with their king followed him trembling.

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. To relieve himself and his people under this distress, Saul ventured upon an unwarrantable action, in order to make a shew of the divine presence and power accompanying his design, and thereby to strengthen and confirm the wavering minds of his followers, he commanded a burnt-offering and peace-offerings to be brought unto him; and he offered the burnt-offering; hereby invading presumptuously the priest's office, and assuming an authority which did not belong to him, of approaching unto God in this solemn act of his worship.

He was rebuked by Samuel for this unjustifiable act in the words above-repeated: *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.*

There could have been no cause for breaking the power of his kingdom, if it had been held always in due subjection to the will and command of God. *But now thy kingdom shall not continue.* Thy kingdom, implies the authority which he meant to retain by holding the reins of government, supported only by the temporal power of the state; for by disobeying the divine command in governing his people, his kingdom rested

only on the power of the state ; and on this account Samuel said to Saul, *Thy kingdom shall not continue : thy power shall shortly come to an end, in governing according to thy own will, or according to the will of the people.*

Then it follows, that God designed to translate the kingdom to another person ; and because Saul followed the imagination of his heart in his act of disobedience, it was said to him, *The Lord hath sought a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.*

And so, according to the clearness of divine prescience, the sceptre was given to the tribe of Judah.

In the subsequent record of the sacred history relating to Saul, we are informed of the success granted to his son Jonathan, assisted only by his armour-bearer, against a garrison of the Philistines, which it appears Saul was not at this time able to assail, as he had then no more with him, that could be brought to attack it, than *about six hundred men.* But it is to be observed how Jonathan resolved upon this undertaking :

And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised ; it may be that the Lord will work for us : for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

And so, according to his faith and confidence in the Lord, it prospered with him ; for he and his armour-bearer climbing up a difficult pass, through which they could not be expected, they fell suddenly upon the men who kept that garrison of the Philistines, which, for the space it occupied, might be about *an half acre of land,* in which they slew *about twenty men.* And so the whole garrison being discomfited, and flying down to the host encamped in the field, a trembling and astonishment came upon them, with such distraction, that *the multitude melted away, and went on, beating down one another.* So that when Saul and his men came to the battle,

battle, the Philistines were so enraged at the hindrances they met with in their flight, that *behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture.* Moreover, the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed Saul after them in the battle. So the Lord saved Israel that day; and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

And the men of Israel were distressed that day; for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food.

That Saul might engage the attention of the people, to consider him as the principal instrument of obtaining this victory, he presumptuously ventured, of his own will, to lay them under this curse, which, in event, proved quite contrary to his expectations; for the people being faint, through want of food, became hereby unable to pursue their enemies, and the victory was much less considerable, than otherways it had been.

Another yet worse consequence of the rashness of Saul in this matter was, the misfortune of his own son, Jonathan, who disobeyed, through ignorance, his father's order; and he became thereby liable to the forfeiture of his life, who had been the chief instrument of this wonderful success.

The people also, by the same cause, were guilty of a transgression; for after the time of abstaining from food was expired, *the people were very faint: and the people slew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood, unlawfully.*

By this signal advantage obtained over the Philistines, the reputation of Saul, and of his people, was increased

to so good effect, in giving terror to his enemies, that he fought against all his enemies on every side; and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them.

The next remarkable event in the reign of Saul is that concerning his behaviour, in respect to the express command of God, given to him by Samuel, to destroy the Amalekites. This command was introduced with such peculiar solemnity, as bespoke his utmost regard and attention to it.

Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: hereby reminding him of his obligation to acknowledge, by his obedience unto God, that he held his kingdom by his special designation and appointment. Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel; how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

As this war was undertaken by the especial command of God, the army which was ready to engage in it was very numerous; for so we are told, Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah, until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that was good; but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

The prophet is soon after sent to Saul, to accuse him of his transgression, and declare to him the purpose of God to deprive him of the kingdom for his disobedience. The defence which Saul made, was the

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best he could have offered ; to which he received a remarkable answer.

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice ; and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

A reproof, which may serve for a general caution against all pretences of serving God, by any other way than in obeying his voice, by hearkening to the instruction of his word.

And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel ? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite ; for I have provided me a king among his sons.

And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably ? And he said, Peaceably : I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord : sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him.

The prophet, according to his own apprehension, would have chosen a king from his outward appearance, corresponding in those perfections to the person of Saul, upon which account the choice of him became acceptable to the people ; but after the trial and rejection of him, the Lord chose a king to reign over his people from a regard to the inward disposition of his heart, by which every man is judged of in his sight :

For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren. And the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.

From this transaction of the prophet observing the command of God, by anointing David to be king over Israel, according to his designation, the spiritual reign of David does commence, that is, whatsoever blessings God was pleased to vouchsafe to his people, as subject to the divine government, they were from hence forward conveyed through David, as his instrument of deriving his favours and protection to them.

It had been said concerning Saul, that after Samuel had anointed him, *God gave him another heart*; from whence we may collect, according to the style of the holy writings, that God was pleased, by the influence of his spirit, to remove from Saul the evil habits or dispositions which he had contracted by his former course of life; so that when he was anointed king, as Samuel had declared to him, he was *turned into another man*.

This observation accounts for what passed when Saul *prophefied among the prophets*, who were probably the disciples or scholars of Samuel; *Then the people said one to another, What is this that is come to the son of Kish?* Is Saul also among the prophets? How does this agree with the former course of his life? *And one of the same place answered and said, But who is their father?* If Saul be one of these prophets, who is their teacher, or the father of their instruction or discipline? for it is not likely that Saul should be the son or disciple of Samuel, the prophet and servant of God.

After

After David was anointed, as before repeated, *the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward, but the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.* That extraordinary aid or understanding, which he had received from God upon his election to the kingdom, was now withdrawn; and as he had been most solemnly assured, that he was rejected of God from being king, and no longer accounted so in his sight, a dejected and melancholy envious spirit, arising from such reflections, seized upon him; or, as it is expressed in the sacred style, *an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.*

The temporal power of the kingdom still remained with Saul, and continued in his hands so long as he lived, by which means he persecuted David continually, having taken the first occasion of resentment against him through jealousy of his reputation among the people, after a signal victory over the Philistines, which was obtained principally by the hand of David, who slew Goliath, their *champion, the Philistine of Gath.*

The remaining part of the reign of Saul contains little more matter of observation, but what relates to his incessant attempts against the life of David: for his farther successes against the enemies of Israel, by whose hands Saul did hope he might be slain, still increased his wretchedness, through his hatred and suspicion of him, and thereby gave occasion to David to manifest the uprightness and sincerity of his heart, with unalterable respect and reverence to the person of the king.

In the severe trials which David underwent through continued persecution, most narrowly escaping death from the wrath of Saul, we have a very admirable instance of refined friendship and disinterested affection preserved for him, in the most amiable behaviour and address of Jonathan, the son of Saul, whose excellent and unblemished character well deserved that majestic and most affecting lamentation of David, mourning for Saul, and for his brother Jonathan, after they were slain in battle on mount Gilboa.

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The beauty of Israel is slain in thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! &c. 2 Sam. i. 19.

Having now considered the reign of Saul with respect to those circumstances which were most worthy of our attention, it will yet be necessary to make some farther reflections upon it, suitable to our present purpose.

It has been already observed, that the desire of the people of Israel to have a King set over them, *like all the nations*, did imply an attempt against the authority of God their King and Law-giver, who does in this sense explain it to Samuel, *They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* So that the meaning of their request in desiring a King, was to set up the temporal power of the state, or community, united under visible ensigns of authority and command, vested in the person of their King, instead of the judges or captains set over them, as their occasions did require, by the designation or appointment of God.

The reason also of this perverse choice hath been already mentioned, as arising from the oppressions they frequently laboured under in subjection to their enemies, into whose hands they were sold and delivered over by the just judgment of God, for their apostacy in deserting from his service to the worship of idols. And in consequence also of their infidelity, they suffered from intestine disturbances among themselves by their own wickedness.

To remove these complaints, they did not bethink themselves of returning to their duty by serving God only, and regarding his laws, but they sought for another remedy to become *like all the nations*, whose power and prosperity they envied and observed. And they would not be persuaded by Samuel's arguments to depart from their purpose, for they said, *Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us to fight our battles.*

If they had become, like all the nations, subject to the will of an arbitrary prince, the authority of God's law would have ceased among them, who were from thenceforward to depend on the will of their King. But their request made to Samuel the servant of God, must be understood with this limitation, that they did still desire to be governed according to the law of God, and yet to have a King set over them like all the nations.

To make these two things consistent, God was pleased to order his prophet to comply with their request, and after giving them warning of the manner of the King, to chuse one for them such as they themselves did approve; and in consequence of this choice he commanded also both the King and the people to observe only the law of God.

The difference between this form of government and what they had formerly lived under while the prophetic judges continued in Israel, lay in this particular, that the King had the temporal power of the state committed into his hands by the choice of the people, which he was enjoined by the prophet to employ in ruling only according to his instruction and knowledge in the Will and Word of God; whereas, the judges had no other claim to the temporal power in the state, but as commissioned by extraordinary aids of divine power to work deliverances for the people in distress: on such occasions it was manifest that the hand of God interposed, by making his servants the instruments of miraculous success and blessings to the nation of Israel.

In this latter case there could be no competition between the spiritual and the temporal power, between the authority of God and the will of the judge or chief officer of the state: but upon the election of the King, there was a foundation laid for that competition; the King might chuse to govern according to his own will, and not according to the law of God; and the people also to follow their King in doing wickedly,

edly, whensoever he might depart from observance of the Will and Word of God.

That the trial of intrusting this power in the hands of their King, might be made with the greatest advantage and condescension in favour of that importunate request of the people, we are informed concerning Saul, that *God gave him another heart* so soon as he had left Samuel who had anointed him to be King; from whence we are to conclude, that no corrupt bias or prepossession remained upon his mind, arising from his former course of life, by which he might be tempted to abuse his power, but he was *turned into another man*, by an internal change and alteration wrought in his spirit, from whence he was inclined, and did accordingly join with the prophets whom he found on his way, in acknowledging the power, and in giving praises unto God.

The instances of Saul's disobedience to the word of God, which are related in the sacred history, do all conspire to prove the insufficiency of the law of nature as a rule of government under the sanctions of temporal rewards and punishments; and to shew in him, as the representative of the Kings of *all the nations*, what consequences do arise from an opposition between the spiritual and temporal power, that wheresoever they appear to lead contrary ways, the temporal power is preferred as the principle of action, by attempts to subject the spiritual power to the supposed or apparent interest or welfare of the state.

Thus it proved on the first occasion which presented this choice to Saul, when Samuel told him, *Thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal, and behold I will come down unto thee to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.* Saul did not comply with this instruction of the prophet; for he and his people were greatly alarmed at the mighty preparations of the Philistines, who had *gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and*
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six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude: When the people of Israel saw that, they were in a strait (for the people were distressed); an expression which deserves to be remarked, as implying the want or failure of that spirit of undaunted resolution, and confidence of victory, which they were used to express when they were led on by divine command: but now being discouraged by the dreadful appearance of their enemies, very many of them fled away, and hid themselves in caves, and thickets, and rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

To recover the people from this distracted apprehension of their danger, and to unite them under his command, their King did adventure, in opposition to the express direction of the prophet, to offer sacrifices himself, as if he were divinely commissioned for the performance of this act of religious worship, to approach unto God.

When Saul was reproved by Samuel for this act of presumption, he made that defence which would seem to imply a principal regard to the favour and protection of God. *And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together to Michmash: Therefore, said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.*

In answer to this specious apology for his transgression, *Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly, by striving, through unlawful means, to hinder the people from being scattered from thee, and to preserve the external shew of power in thy command; thou hast lost thereby the power of divine support, for thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever: but now thy kingdom shall not continue.*

From

From hence we see the motives by which Saul was influenced to commit this offence, that they are clearly laid open, both by the circumstances related concerning his situation, and by the defence he made in excusing his disobedience; for he was alarmed with the dreadful appearance of the Philistines, and discouraged also by the flight and desertion of his own people; therefore to confirm the resolution of those who staid with him, and to bring others back who were scattered from him, and thereby to regain and unite the power of his army for encountering his enemies, he adventured to disobey the command of God given by Samuel, who enjoined him to stay at Gilgal until he came to tell him what he should do, in order to oppose this dangerous invasion of the Philistines: the offence of Saul was aggravated also by his perverting a solemn act of religious worship which he presumptuously performed, to become the instrument of preserving to him that temporal power and authority among the people, with which he had been intrusted by the appointment of God.

So that the case is plain according to the foregoing observation, that in this instance Saul did prefer the temporal power he enjoyed as a principle of action, misled by his reasonings concerning his own honour and interest, and the welfare of the state, in opposition and in disregard of the spiritual power, that is, of the command, and authority, and of the honour of God.

Besides the severe rebuke which was given to Saul by Samuel for his transgression, we may consider the miraculous success of Jonathan and his armour-bearer, as carrying along with it a reproach of the folly and impatience of Saul, who found, by diligent search among his people, that when that great host of his enemies was discomfited, and the multitude melted away, only Jonathan and his armour-bearer had gone out to the battle.

But instead of regarding this interposition of divine power and protection with due acknowledgment and respect,

respect, Saul made an attempt to arrogate to himself the chief glory of that remarkable victory; for to this effect we must interpret the purpose of that rash oath which he laid upon the people, when he said, *Cursed be the man that eateth any food until the evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies*: as if it were principally by his own hand, and by those who were about him, that this mighty exploit had been done; and so he desired to have it considered by his people.

The consequences which arose from this rash vow of Saul did serve to reprove him for it, and tended also, in opposition to what he expected, to diminish his authority among the people; for they rescued Jonathan from the cruelty of his father, who had sworn he should die for an offence which he had unwittingly committed.

The next instance of Saul's disobedience to the command of God, to destroy the Amalekites, does not require any farther explanation than what we find at large in the sacred history: this command was delivered in the most solemn manner, and in the most express and clearest terms, so that no difficulty could arise in understanding his duty, nor any pretence be alledged in excuse for the breach of it, but what must imply a full conviction and confession of his guilt. Accordingly, when he is reproached for sparing Agag, and the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, he was constrained to say unto Samuel, *I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.*

He had before urged in his defence, that he and the people designed to sacrifice unto the Lord the choice oxen and sheep they had reserved of the spoil; but when Samuel replied in the remarkable words already recited, *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams.* Saul was not able to withstand the force

force of this reproof, and therefore acknowledged himself to be guilty : he was guilty in obeying the voice of the people, conspiring with his own covetous heart, to persuade him to transgress against the authority and commandment of the Lord.

After the confession Saul made of his sin, he entreated Samuel to accept of that acknowledgment of his guilt, and having thereby humbled himself before him, he did, on that account, hope for, and expect, forgiveness; for so he expressed his desire to Samuel, *Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord.* Which address implied a supposition of this offence being chiefly given to Samuel, or at the least if he were appeased, Saul would meet with no difficulty by worshipping to find acceptance with God.

To undeceive him in this matter, *Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being King over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold on the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. And also the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent.*

And he said, I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel. Hereby Saul shewed his concern was chiefly to retain the authority and his power among the people; and to make shew before them as if he were not forsaken of the divine favour and protection, he entreats the prophet, *turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.*

The subsequent passages of the reign of Saul, which are related in sacred history, do conspire also to prove the assertion above-mentioned, that is, to shew the preference given by him to the temporal power of the state, and how anxiously he retained it after he was rejected

jected of the Lord, and that the spiritual power of his favour was withdrawn from him: so that instead of making due acknowledgment that he held his power and authority in the state absolutely dependent upon the Will and appointment of God, and in consequence surrendering it up to the prophet, to be disposed of as God should direct, the mind of Saul became obstinate and imbittered by the declaration of the prophet concerning his rejection from the kingdom; and such an evil spirit of resentment came upon him, that when Samuel received the command to anoint the son of Jesse, he said, *How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me.* He was so far from submitting himself under the hand of divine power, that he had taken resolution to contend against it.

The same observation is confirmed also by Saul's continual persecution of David, and his treacherous purposes against his life; the reason of which is assigned; for *Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.*

As the last effort he could make, in the conclusion of his reign, by applying himself to the witch, he sought for refuge under the protection of infernal power, to make a stand against the judgments that were coming upon him through the anger of the Lord.

From this account of the reign of Saul, which is preserved to us in the sacred writings, we see in him, as the representative of the *Kings of all the nations*, what consequences will arise in all human governments when the will of the prince, or the supposed interest of the state, are found to be in competition with the authority and the commandment of God.

If the law of nature is taken as the rule of government, established and confirmed by sanctions of temporal rewards and punishments, both the Prince and the people will judge for themselves, as Saul and the Israelites did with regard to the Amalekites; that is, they will be misled by their own reasonings concerning their tem-

poral power and prosperity, and will be tempted to disobey the commands of God, and to transgress his laws, when they have it in their power to avail themselves in temporal advantages by the spoils of their enemies.

As this trial of Saul's government was made with every concession that could be granted in his favour, and with the utmost condescension to the request of the people, it was never more to be repeated; so that the first King of Israel was the last in his kingdom over the nation of Israel, who was made the representative of the Kings of ALL THE NATIONS, to prove the insufficiency of the LAW of NATURE established by divine authority as a rule of government, and recommended under the most favourable circumstances to the observance of the King, and of the people.

S E C T. VII.

THE next remarkable æra in the history of the nation of Israel does begin at the reign of David the son of Jesse.

The instruction given to the prophet to anoint him, is in these words.

And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oyl, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided me a King among his sons, or more exactly, according to the Hebrew, I have seen among his sons a King for me.

It has been already observed, that from the time that Samuel anointed David King over Israel, the spiritual reign of David did commence, that is, he was their King in the account of God, who did, through his hands, convey his blessings to that nation, in affording them his protection, and giving them deliverance from their enemies by David his servant.

But as the temporal power of the state had been lodged in the hands of Saul at the request of the people,

ple, it did still continue with him till he died, after the Lord had rejected him from being King: which afforded more clear and certain proofs of the consequences arising from an opposition between the spiritual power of God, and the temporal power of the state; for Saul persisted in persecuting David, after he saw and knew that God was with him; and he accused his own son bitterly, for engaging himself in friendship with David, and helping him to escape from his resentment.

Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and to the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom: wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

This was a plain declaration made by Saul, that he had resolved to cut off David; and the reason of his purposing to do so is clearly laid open; for he thought, by putting him to death, to disappoint the counsel and purpose of God to make him King over Israel, and thereby to establish himself and his family in the kingdom, in contradiction to what Samuel had declared to him in the name of the Lord.

The same circumstance of the temporal power being continued in the hands of Saul, did afford likewise very many opportunities for witnessing the constancy and faithfulness of David: for the falshood, and treachery, and cruel treatment he met with from Saul, did never prevail with him to engage in a rebellion against him, or to form any party under that pretence; but he resisted every temptation of that sort which came in his way, and the more he was persecuted by the tyranny of Saul, he humbled himself the more to avoid his resentment.

But most especially on those remarkable occasions, when he might have concluded that Saul was delivered into his hands to suffer death, he cut off only the skirt

of his robe, and took away his spear from his bolster, to convince him of the uprightness of his heart, and that he ought not to suspect him of any evil purpose, as intending to disturb him in the possession of his kingdom. So that when David had the power in his hands to have destroyed Saul, and thereby have rid himself of his most bitter enemy, and at the same time had assurance of succeeding him in his kingdom; yet he resigned that power absolutely into the hand of God, upon whom alone he depended to clear his way through the difficulties he laboured under, and, in his due time, to confirm him in the kingdom which he had promised to him.

From these circumstances of his intire submission to the Will of God under the greatest temptations, he obtained that glorious testimony of his integrity which Samuel delivered to Saul in behalf of David, when he said of him, that *the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people.*

After the death of Saul and his sons, we find David persisting in the same resolution of conducting himself altogether according to the counsel of God, in making his approaches towards the kingdom over Israel; so that he did not move from Ziklag in the country of the Philistines, where he was told of their death, until he enquired of the Lord, saying, *Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.*

In this city he reigned over the tribe of Judah for seven years, until Ishbosheth the son of Saul, who had reigned over the other tribes from the death of his father, being treacherously slain, the way was thereby cleared for David to obtain the kingdom over all Israel.

The conduct of David towards Ishbosheth did correspond with his behaviour to Saul his father; for it appears that Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host,

host, who took Ishbosheth his master's son's son, and made him king over Israel, was he who began the war against David, to subdue the tribe of Judah, and bring it also under obedience to the son of Saul; for so we are told, that *Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon; and, to oppose them in any attempt they might make to invade or disturb the tribe of Judah, Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met together by the pool at Gibeon, where, by Abner's contrivance, a battle ensued between the servants of David and the men of Israel, in which the former prevailed at this time, and in many other conflicts; until at length Ishbosheth being weakened by the revolt of Abner, by whom he was principally supported, two others of his captains conspired, and treacherously put him to death: their application to David in expectation of a reward for this service, gave him an opportunity to reprove them for their villainy, and to punish them with death for their treason; which manifested a perfect uprightness in the mind of David, who viewed with abhorrence and just resentment any wicked action, howsoever profitable it might seem to the purposes of the worldly power of his kingdom.*

His words on this occasion deserve our notice, as declaring his constant resolution to rest his power only upon those means which were clearly consistent with the Will of God, and therefore free from any art of deceit, or of falsehood, or treachery.

And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, when one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, (thinking to have brought good tidings) I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: how much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house, upon his bed? shall I not therefore require his blood at your hand, and take you away from the earth? And David com-

manded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron; but they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

From this time the reign of David over all Israel did commence; for so we are told in the sacred history; *Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past when Saul was King over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the King to Hebron, and King David made a league with them before the Lord: and they anointed David King over Israel.*

By this acknowledgment and approbation of the people agreeing to the choice which God had made of David to be captain over them, he was confirmed both in the spiritual and temporal power of the kingdom over the nation of Israel.

Soon after this transaction we are told, that *When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David King over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it and went down to the hold. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand?*

From this account it appears, that David had no confidence in that power which the people had put into his hands; for he would not rely upon it as sufficient to encounter his enemies, unless he had also the counsel of God to assist him in the undertaking; and therefore he would not move until he was encouraged by his answer; *And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.*

The same observation is to be made concerning all the transactions of his reign, as the Captain and King of Israel, that he did not exert the temporal power of the state, but in consequence of his obedience to the Will or spiritual power of God.

Not

Not long after the foregoing instance, there does appear another in the sacred history to the the same effect, as concerning David's behaviour upon a subsequent invasion of the Philistines; whom he defeated by coming upon them at the time, and in the manner prescribed to him by the appointment of God. This we find in 2 Sam. v. 22. &c.

From these examples, particularly recorded, we are to conclude on all other occasions, where the circumstances are not explicitly declared, that David did make resistance, or carried on war against his enemies, accordingly as he was influenced and directed by divine counsel and command.

It may be proper also to take notice in regard to that undertaking, of which he seemed most desirous, to build a house for the name of the Lord, and for which purpose, according to all human appearance, he was perfectly qualified; yet on the advice of Nathan the prophet relating to this matter, as otherwise determined by divine counsel, David did immediately desist from his purpose, and glorified God for his gracious promises to favour his son, and to make him the builder of his temple.

But although David was found unblemished in his character as a King, acting always in due submission and acknowledgment of the supreme and spiritual power of God, and therefore enjoyed the temporal power of his kingdom in such manner as to deserve that high commendation which God had given of him in this respect; yet as a man, like others of his brethren, being subject to the law of nature, and liable to those passions which tempt us to disobedience, he became also a very great sinner, and was guilty of two most heinous crimes, of adultery and murder: the circumstances of which are related at large in the sacred writings.

There does not appear any foundation for an attempt to mitigate or excuse his transgressions; the charge brought against him by the prophet, is delivered in terms very clearly expressing the high degree of his

guilt, and his ingratitude towards God, whose servant is commissioned also to acquaint him of the punishments that were to be brought on him and his house for these great offences, when he told him, in the name of the Lord,

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

In answer to all that Nathan said on this occasion, we find only this confession made by David, *I have sinned against the Lord.*

As God, who looketh upon the heart, did see that he was truly penitent for his sin, the prophet did immediately reply,

The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. Which accordingly came to pass soon after.

Upon this occasion we find David did make most earnest supplication, with fasting and weeping, to intreat God to spare the life of his child; both on account of his natural affection to the child, and also, if it might be, to avert this first instance of God's displeasure in the punishment of his sin, that the death of his child might not become a sign of the full accomplishment of all that the prophet had denounced against him.

Those evils which were threatened to the house of David for his transgressions, were introduced by disorders arising in his family, which bore some resemblance to his own offence.

Amnon his son conceived an unlawful passion for his sister, which he gratified by violence, and thereby provoked

voked Absalom to revenge the injury, by the murder of Amnon his brother.

David was greatly afflicted by these troubles; but at length his grief for the loss of his son Amnon wearing out of his mind, he was pleased, at the instance and entreaty of Joab, and complied with it, to recall his favourite son Absalom from banishment, and to restore him to his favour.

But the most grievous trial in the punishment of David, which came upon him in the decline of his life, arose from the ingratitude and treasonable designs of Absalom.

The king's great affection to him was well known, and from thence he took occasion of presuming to be his successor in the throne; and, by his artful addresses, did ingratiate himself with the people for this purpose: so that, before he was discovered, his ambition had grown up to a very dangerous height, *and the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom.* Many, even of such persons as David could least have suspected, were become parties in the treason of Absalom.

It may appear strange that David, who had been very many years firmly settled upon his throne, should immediately, upon receiving an account of this rebellion, determine to leave Jerusalem, the capital of his kingdom, to be entered without opposition by his enemies, and to abandon himself and his followers to such a precipitate flight, as might seem to indicate a total despair of his condition; for to this effect he expressed himself.

David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee, for we shall not escape else from Absalom: make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

From this declaration it is plain, he did not then mean to oppose Absalom by force, as being persuaded, that, if he did, he would fall before him, which he had
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reason to conclude from the message brought to him by Nathan ; one part of which he saw clearly fulfilled, according to the word of God sent to him : *I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house :* and the other part of it, *I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lye with thy wives in the sight of this sun.*

This implied such distress would be brought upon him, that he could not protect even his own wives from violence ; and therefore would be utterly unable, by making resistance, to withstand his enemy.

Accordingly we find he did not think of mustering up and arming his forces upon this occasion ; nor did he command his servants by his authority to march with him in his retreat ; but such as were faithful to him he advised to consult their own safety, and attend him in his flight.

To the like purpose he spake to Ittai the Gittite, who went out of Jerusalem in his company, bringing along with him six hundred of his brethren : David desired that they would return to the city, *and abide with the king ;* that as strangers, they might, by their submission to Absalom, escape his resentment, and avoid the troubles they would meet with in their banishment with him ; so that he did not propose to strengthen himself by numbers of armed men.

The same observation does more clearly occur to us, from the commands of the king given to Zadock the priest, who had followed him with the Levites, *bearing the ark of the covenant of God.* And the king said unto Zadock, *Carry back the ark of God into the city : if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation.* But if he thus say, *I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.*

All these circumstances bear witness to the absolute submission of David, under the hand of God, in his distress ; that he resigned himself altogether into his power, and would not employ his own power or counsel

fel to extricate himself, howsoever probable it might have appeared, that he could have withstood the traitorous attempt of Absalom, and have got revenge of him for his wicked and ungrateful rebellion.

We find also, that the servants of David followed him, with the same temper of mind in which he humbled himself, when he departed from the throne of his kingdom and his royal city. *And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot. And all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went up.*

In this most remarkable instance of David's humiliation, we have a certain proof of his sincere repentance for the sins, for which he knew these calamities were brought upon him: he acknowledged the justice of God by his patience, and manifested his faith by reliance upon the hand of God to deliver him in that way and time he should think fit. From whence he gave a more evident token of his obedience and resignation to the spiritual and invisible power of God, under this very grievous trial of his constancy, than what he could have done, had he enjoyed his power without interruption, after he had been fully settled and quieted in the throne.

When it pleased God to release him from this severe chastisement, by ordering those events which were preparatory to his deliverance, according to the account we have of them in the sacred history, we find that David was enabled, by the numbers which came to him, to engage in battle with Absalom, who had pursued him to the wood of Ephraim, where this rebellious son of David was slain, against the consent and positive instructions given by his father to preserve his life.

Upon this occasion it appears again, how much David had accused himself as the cause of these dreadful disorders which had arisen in his house; for to this consideration, as well as to his natural affection, we may impute the mournful lamentation of David, when

thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom : would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.

It is clear from the foregoing observations, which have been made upon the reign of David, that from the time he was anointed by Samuel, until the conclusion of the rebellion of Absalom, amidst all the various temptations and severe trials with which he was exercised, that he did never seek to release himself from them, by applying to the force or temporal power of his kingdom, without due consideration and respect given to the power and authority of God. So that in the life-time of Saul, who did most cruelly and unjustly persecute him, David was not provoked to revenge himself, though he had it in his power more than once to have killed his merciless enemy. But although he was king of Israel, by the appointment of God, declared to him by the prophet, yet he made no step to seize upon the throne, until the way was cleared for him by the death of Saul; and even then he did not move towards it, until he had received express direction by the answer returned to him, when he had consulted God for that purpose.

His behaviour under the sore distress and affliction which came upon him by the treason of Absalom, we have already observed, that it does afford a most remarkable instance of his entire submission to the will of God. As he knew his calamities had arisen from his offences against him, he humbled himself immediately upon the appearance of the hand of God in his punishment, being according to the word he had sent to him by his prophet; and therefore he resigned up his royal power and command, and altogether declined any exertion of it, giving the title also of king unto Absalom, until it pleased God, by the method's of his providence, to restore him to his throne.

In these circumstances of David labouring under his afflictions, we can discern the great difference between him and Saul; for the latter did incessantly endeavour
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to destroy David, who was guiltless towards him, because he knew that he was taken into the favour of God, after he himself had been rejected for his disobedience to him ; and, instead of humbling himself under the displeasure of God, by making a resignation of his power into his hands, he held it in opposition to the divine appointment, and fought at length to the aid of infernal power to preserve him from his enemies.

In opposition to what has been said concerning the invariable respect given by David to the command and authority of God, by holding the temporal power of his kingdom in absolute submission and dependance on the will of God ; there does appear one instance of his disrespect and presumption, in giving command to number the people, without having consulted God in regard to this matter.

The account of this transaction, as related in the sacred history, is to this effect: That God being displeased with Israel, suffered David to be tempted by Satan to number the people ; with which temptation he complied, and withstood the good counsel of Joab, who advised him against it.

His design in this matter was to make an exact list or enrolment of all the men fit for war, which implied a supposition in the mind of David, that the strength or stability of his kingdom might be known or computed by him, according to the numbers of his subjects, whom he might draw out upon occasion to withstand his enemies. It is plain this was the design, by the reply made by Joab against this order. *And Joab answered, The Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be : but my Lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants ? why doth my lord require this thing ? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel ?*

Which was an argument to this purpose, that whereas the king, by his command to him for numbering the people, did suppose the account of them would make a formidable appearance to his enemies, Joab allows it might be so, but prays, at the same time, that
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it would please God yet much more abundantly to increase their numbers, though his subjects did already make up a very great multitude of people. But as to any profit that might arise to his service from performing this task, he denies it, under the form of this question, *Are they not all my Lord's servants?* to be ready every one upon a general summons to obey his commands, as speedily as if their names and places of abode were particularly taken. Therefore he prayed the king to desist from his purpose; that as it was clear he might absolutely command the whole power of his people, on any occasion, there was no need for this undertaking, which could imply nothing more but a vain curiosity to search into the temporal power of his state, as if he meant to rest himself and the stability of his kingdom upon it, thereby renouncing his trust and confidence in the support and protection of God, to rely on the power and arms of his subjects; by which example they also would be tempted to think amiss, in like manner with their king; and therefore Joab urged it to him, *Why will he be a cause of trespass unto Israel?*

This wise reply was made by Joab: But notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host: and Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel. And they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

And that the present strength or power of his subjects might be known unto the king, according to the foregoing observation, they made him a return only of the numbers of men fit for war. So that they reckoned in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men, that drew sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

In consequence of this order, and the execution of it, we are told, *David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people.*

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It is probable the argument of Joab did then recur to his thoughts, and he repented of his transgression, and said, *I have sinned greatly in that I have done.* At the same time also, he received a message from God to reprove him, and give him warning of the punishment he must suffer for it. But before it was inflicted, the choice was left to him, whether it should be by famine, by the sword, or by pestilence; for as *the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*, upon some other account, before this trespass was committed, they came now to be involved in the punishment of it. And whichever choice the king might have made, it would have had the same effect and tendency to convince him and his people of the folly of that offence, by manifesting, that all shews of temporal power are vain against the counsel of God, who, by secret and invisible means, can blast or destroy it, either by degrees, or instantly, by pestilence, by the sword, or by famine.

There fell at this time in the plague, which passed through *the people from Dan even to Beersheba, seventy thousand men.*

When God was pleased, at the earnest request and intercession of David, to stay the destroying angel from stretching his hand over Jerusalem, to cut off its inhabitants, the king was commanded to rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, on which place the temple and its courts were built afterwards by Solomon.

When David was old, and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. And having ordered all the affairs of his court and kingdom, and the services of the priests and Levites, according to the several courses of their ministration, *David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and the captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.*

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Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people; As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building.

But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.

Howbeit, the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father, he liked me to make me king over all Israel: And of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon, thy son, he shall build my house, and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.

Moreover, I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments, and my judgments, as at this day.

Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God; that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever.

And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.

Upon a full consideration of the faithful example, and of the wise and pious instructions which were given by this holy king to his son, and to his people; together with the order and œconomy of his court, the regular appointments of his officers and mighty men,
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the great number of his subjects that were fit for war, and the exceeding abundance of his treasures, including the provision and preparations made by him for the building of the temple; add to this his care in regard to the performance of the service of God, by the several courses of the priests and Levites distributed in due order, according to the stated returns of their ministration; it will appear from this complex view of the kingdom of Israel, as it stood in the latter end of the reign of David, that he did deliver it into the hands of Solomon, with all advantages that could be desired, to confirm and establish him in the throne.

After these observations upon the reign of David, which have arisen from the transactions that are recorded in the sacred history, giving evidence to his sincerity and uprightness, in holding the temporal power of his kingdom in due submission and acknowledgment of the spiritual and invisible power of God; it will now properly occur to be examined by us, in what manner the promise made to him and his son has been fulfilled, which the prophet Nathan delivered to him in the name of God, when he said to David, 2 Sam. vii. 16. *Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever.*

There is no cause to animadvert upon these words, as if they did not fully express the true import of the original Hebrew text; but if it is yet more closely translated, it agrees more perfectly with the design of the prophet, explaining the purpose and counsel of God in these words; *Thy house shall be faithful, and thy kingdom everlasting before thy face; thy throne shall be immovable for ever.*

By this prophetic declaration it is implied, that the true faith in the name of God shall continue in the house of David, propagated from him among his descendants to the latest ages; that his kingdom resting upon this principle, shall be everlasting before his face, the law and policy of it being declared by him, and his

throne, upholden and supported by this law, shall be established and immoveable for ever.

The first part of this promise was accomplished by the true faith in God being propagated from David to Solomon, which descended from Solomon, according to the record of generations preserved in the gospel of St. Matthew, unto our Lord Christ, the son of David; and upon account of this son, who was *a greater than Solomon*, the house of David was eminently distinguished by this title, *Thy house shall be faithful*.

The second part of the promise to David is fulfilled also by the reign of our Lord the Messiah, possessing the kingdom over the people of God, according to the law published by David his father, which is everlasting, as declared by him, or before his face, in his prophetic writings.

The third part also is accomplished in our Lord Christ sitting upon the *throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel*, which is not unstable, like the thrones of earthly potentates, moving from one house or family to another; but his throne continues established, and immoveable in the house of David for ever.

From this explanation of the promise made to David, by which the principal heads of it are separated and distinguished, it becomes necessary to examine them in their order, and to observe yet more explicitly how the whole design and purpose of the promise are faithfully and exactly fulfilled.

The first part of it has been already considered, where it came properly in our way to observe, that the generation of the faithful is continued by instruction, descending from the father to the son, as it did from Abraham to David, and from David to our Lord Christ. And that in the account of God, to whose eyes our new birth, or regeneration is apparent, we are said to be the sons of those persons who first taught and instructed us in the true faith of his holy NAME, which has been remarked and exemplified by instances taken from the inspired writers.

So that in accomplishment of the promise made to David, our Lord Christ was the son of David in the true faith, by descent, according to the record of generation by St. Matthew; and he was the son of David also by natural generation, according to the record of St. Luke; from this compleat evidence, in behalf of the house of David, the word of God to him is sure in saying, *Thy house shall be faithful.*

And thy kingdom everlasting before thy face. For the proof of this part we appeal to the prophetic writings of David, compared with the gospel, or spiritual law of Christ; and from the agreement and conformity between them, the evidence of his kingdom everlasting does appear: for the power and policy of his kingdom still continue the same, David himself having reigned as subject to, or under the law of Christ. So he said, in acknowledgment of his dependance on him, in Psalm cx.

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Upon this expression of David, as dictated to him by the Holy Spirit, concerning the Messiah, our Lord himself raised an objection to that view or consideration the Scribes then had of him, under the form of this question: *How say the Scribes, that Christ is the son of David? for David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord: how is he then his son?* For David looking upon the Messiah as his son by descent, in the order of natural generation, would not have called him Lord.

Therefore, when we answer this question, according to the light of the gospel revelation, it corresponds to the declaration made by David; for it follows, that David, by calling the Messiah his Lord, did not acknowledge him as his son only, but, in another respect, as the son of God also, taken up and exalted in his human nature into heaven, there to sit on the right hand of God, until all his enemies being subdued and put under his feet, by full confession made unto

the majesty of his power, he shall come the second time, to judge and to triumph over them, and then begin his reign upon earth in glory.

In consequence of this acknowledgment of David, as the Apostle argues, *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST.*

From hence David proceeds in describing prophetically other circumstances of the reign of the Messiah.

The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Sion.

Which was fulfilled by the preaching of our Lord, and by the preaching of his Apostles at Jerusalem, after they had received the Holy Ghost upon his ascension into heaven ; and in consequence of his preaching the word of truth, he has the sanction of divine authority for the support of his government.

Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies ; (beKeReB) in the inner part or secret counsel of thine enemies, to overcome and bear down all their opposition.

In the day of thy power shall the people offer thee free-will offerings with an holy worship.

In the day of thy spiritual power, acknowledged and confessed by all thy people, they will offer thee pure worship in the beauties of holiness, derived from their sincerity and purity of heart, suitable to thy unspotted purity ; for,

The dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning.

Free from the stain of original sin, from whence all unclean desires of the heart have proceeded ; and, to confirm thee in the possession of that honour he hath designed for thee,

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent : thou art a priest for ever after the order (Heb. after the word) of Melchisedek.

That is, a king of righteousness, constituted a king and a priest, both to rule and to make intercession for the people of God ; *not after the law of a carnal commandment*, as the Mosaical priests were ordained to their office by ORDER of natural generation, but by the

the word of God, *after the power of an endless life, thou art a priest for ever, after the ORDER of Melchisedek.*

In the second part of this Psalm, the prophet, speaking of the Messiah unto God, saith,

The Lord on thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

When they offend against the laws of his kingdom, he will break the power of the mighty ones upon earth, and kings themselves shall be pierced thro' and cut off by the fury of his resentment : for

He shall judge among the heathen, to recompence them according to their deservings.

He shall fill the places with the dead bodies of them who stand out in rebellion to the power of his kingdom.

He shall wound the heads over many countries, who exalt themselves in the stratagems of temporal power and policy to withstand his will.

But in the state of his humiliation, preparatory to his exaltation to the right hand of God,

He shall drink of the brook (miNaHaL, of the torrent, or troubled stream) *in the way;* being subject to all the bodily wants and weaknesses of his brethren, and to death itself, still abiding in his righteousness.

Therefore shall he lift up his head, by his own power, from the grave, in triumph over his enemies.

The like observations occur to us upon consideration of the second Psalm, which is very nearly to the same effect, both in the form of its composition, and in the description given by it of the reign of the Messiah ; so that it may properly be set after it in the order of prophetic history.

Psalm II.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ?

To what purpose have the nations risen up in fierce contentions about earthly power ? and why will the people of the world imagine a vain thing, to establish the power of their kingdoms by the strength of their own hands ?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed.

The kings and princes of the world, confiding in their own counsels and contrivances, are bold in presumptuous attempts to bear down all opposition to their own wills; and therefore devising, by their own power and policy, to support the prosperity of their estates, they reject and despise the consideration of the divine and spiritual government of the world, as subject to Almighty God, through the Messiah, our Lord the Christ, saying, in the pride of their own self-sufficiency,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Why should we submit to the constraint of this spiritual government, to the observance of the law of the gospel? Let us be free for the carrying on our own purposes, being well enough able for their accomplishment.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

All the counsels and cunning devices of worldly politicians, are very weak and short-sighted, and, in God's account, altogether foolish and contemptible: so that when the mighty ones of the earth are most secure in their own self-sufficiency,

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

The just resentment of Almighty God will be kindled against them, to stir up difficulties and troubles in their affairs, to distress and perplex them in his anger: so that after making their utmost endeavours to establish the wealth and prosperity of their kingdoms, in opposition to his kingdom, he will convince them of their impotency, and speak unto them, in defiance of their feeble attempts,

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

Not-

Notwithstanding every art and device of falshood has been practised to subvert and undermine the spiritual laws of his kingdom, yet the power of it will prevail in opposition to all the powers of this world ; and the throne of the Messiah is immoveable upon the holy hill of Sion.

To shew the certainty of the continuance of this kingdom, the Psalmist, speaking by the Spirit of the Messiah in the word of God to him, reveals this wonderful secret of divine counsel :

I will declare the decree, of the immutable will and purpose of God :

The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son, from everlasting.

This day, in the fullness of time, have I begotten thee, in the human nature from the womb, and again from the grave by thy resurrection.

Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Ask of me, as thy father, an inheritance, and I will give thee all the nations of the earth for thy possession, to continue in such absolute subjection to thy power,

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

While the nations of the earth stand out in rebellion against the sceptre of thy kingdom, and in opposition to the spiritual laws of thy holy religion, thou shalt bruise them under thy sceptre, as with a rod of iron ; and all the forms of their political constitutions thou shalt break, and scatter about the fragments of them, like the broken pieces of a potter's vessel.

From this declaration of the decree, which is immutable according to the promise of Almighty God, the Psalmist draws a general conclusion, in application to the great and mighty rulers of the earth.

Be wise now therefore, O ye kings ; understand from hence your true interest, and betake yourselves to the pursuit of it.

Be instructed, ye judges of the earth, from God's word, making it the rule of your counsels and deliberations, and under that awful regard, which ought to possess your minds, as acting in subjection to the divine government.

Serve the Lord with fear of his displeasure, being always careful to avoid it ; and in the highest state of your temporal power and prosperity,

Rejoice with trembling, in confession of your absolute dependance upon him, without any confidence in your own sufficiency.

Kiss the son, lest he be angry.

Be reconciled to his son, the anointed one, who has entreated you to be at peace with him, by your obedience to those gracious messages he has delivered from his mouth.

Lest he be angry, at your neglect, and ye perish from the right way of obtaining your own happiness and security.

When his wrath is kindled but a little, he may cast you off from his protection, and suffer you to betake yourselves to lies and vain imaginations.

Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Their happiness is rested upon a sure foundation at present and for ever.

The forty-fifth Psalm may be properly inserted here, as containing a majestic description of the person and power of the Messiah, under such emblems of poetical address, derived from the external shew and magnificence of the court of an earthly prince, as might accommodate the instruction given in it to Solomon, the son of David, whose temporal prosperity in the enjoyment of his kingdom, was a representation or shadow of that peace, which will be introduced by the glorious and triumphant reign of the Messiah.

In the latter part of this Psalm, David makes application to the Jewish church, whom he speaks of, first, under the title of the Queen, that nation, according to the prophetic style, being married unto the Lord ; and after-

afterwards the Psalmist exhorts her, as his daughter, to attend to those instructions, by the observance of which she would be recommended to the King. Which circumstance has been before remarked on this psalm. But it may be proper to examine the whole composition of it in this place, with due attention to the original text.

Psalm XLV.

My heart is inditing a good matter : I speak of the things which I have made touching the King : my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

My heart hath prompted me to speak the good word; I am composing the works of my discourse for the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

Thou art fairer than the children of men : grace is poured into thy lips : therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

Thou, the mighty Prince, to whom I direct my address, art fairer than the sons of men, being the Son of the Most High; grace is poured into thy lips, disclosing the beauty and excellency of that knowledge which is in thee; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever with all-sufficiency and power.

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

Put on the ensigns of all temporal power which belongeth unto thee; gird thyself with thy sword upon thy thigh, thou mighty conqueror, to be acknowledged in thy glory and thy majesty.

And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of the word of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

And in thy majesty be thou prosperous and successful, ride upon the word (ReChaB GnaL DeBaR) of truth, of meekness, and righteousness, bear down all opposition by thy Spirit accompanying the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things, by the destructions brought upon the earth, through the perverseness and obstinacy of men resisting the word of truth, of meekness,

ness, and righteousness, and standing out in rebellion to the power of thy spiritual kingdom.

Thine arrows are very sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Thy arrows are sharp, that no armour of human device can be proof against them; the people shall fall under thee by the weapons of thy power directed into the heart of the enemies of the King.

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

Thy throne, O God, the mighty Prince, the Messiah, is from everlasting to everlasting; the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oyl of gladness above thy fellows.

In all the temptations thou hast been exercised with upon earth, thou hast been found to love righteousness, and hast hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God the Father, whom thou hast declared unto the world, hath anointed thee with the oyl of gladness, by the communication of his spirit to thee without measure, in preference to all thy fellows of the sons of men.

All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia; out of the ivory places, whereby they have made thee glad.

The whole order of thy conversation upon earth, the robes of thy innocence are perfumed with odours, which are the prayers of the saints, thy fellows, (Rev. v. 8.) offered up from their mouths (min HiChLe SheN, ex ædibus dentis) by which they have rejoiced thee.

Kings daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the Queen in gold of Ophir.

The daughters of Kings are among thy attendants, being instructed in the secrets of thy wisdom: upon thy right hand hath stood the Queen, the Jewish church, preferred to all others upon earth by peculiar favours, and in its worship and service distinguished by ornaments of excellency in gold of Ophir.

Hearken,

Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

But notwithstanding these advantages which have made thee the Queen in preference to all other people and nations of the earth, yet *hearken, O daughter, and consider*, give thy attention yet farther to those instructions which are offered unto thee, *incline thine ear to the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness*, the gracious messages of God sent unto thee in the preaching of the Messiah; and therefore seeking for thy majesty and thy excellency in acknowledgment and submission to the spiritual laws of his kingdom, *forget also thine own people, and thy father's house*, not reckoning upon it for thine honour that thou art descended from thence, but that thou art first called upon to be the spouse of the Messiah.

So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.

Upon these conditions the King shall greatly desire thy beauty, and vouchsafe peculiar blessings unto thee, which thou art especially bound to seek after.

For he is thy Lord,

The same to whom thou hast ever professed obedience under his dispensation of the law by Moses, and therefore *worship thou him*, and bend thyself in obedience also to the spiritual laws of his gospel given by himself and his apostles.

And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.

And for thy encouragement to this obedience, know that in consequence of it, the most wealthy city of the earth in traffick, the daughter of Tyre, shall acknowledge thy excellency by precious gifts, and the most powerful nations shall entreat for thy favour.

The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.

The King's daughter (taken out of the Jewish church, being the first or primitive society of the church of Christ) is all glorious within, excelling in all those inward

ward ornaments of truth, of meekness, and righteousness, which she hath learned from him; to which also her outward actions are conformable in beauty, being, as her cloathing, of wrought gold.

She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle work.

The first or primitive church of Christ, excelling not only in the inward graces of the mind, but also in her outward attire, she shall be brought unto the King adorned in raiment of needle-work, in robes of purity and constancy, wrought out by their faith under those grievous sufferings which have been brought upon them by their enemies.

The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

All the converts and proselytes out of other nations, which follow as companions to the members of the primitive Christian church of the Jewish nation, these all shall be brought unto thee, O daughter, by which name I call upon the whole Jewish nation, if thou wilt hearken and consider, and incline thine ear unto the truth.

With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayst make Princes in all the earth.

As the consequence of hearkening to, and of obeying, the voice of thy Lord the Messiah will be, that thou shalt seek no more to derive the honour of thy condition from thy fathers the patriarchs of the Jewish nation, and that thou forget also thine own people and thy father's house; instead of thy fathers, in whom thou hast hitherto gloried, shall be thy children of the Christian church, whom thou mayest make Princes in all the earth, converted to the true faith in the name of Christ.

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

In acknowledgment of these blessings which will be derived from thee upon thy conversion to the faith in Christ, I will make thy name to be remembered from generation to generation of the faithful; therefore shall the people of God, all nations taken into his service shall praise thee for ever and ever.

The seventy-second Psalm may be properly added to those we have already considered, as it contains a description of such consequences as will ensue under the government of a King who rules with that wisdom and instruction which is to be derived from the word of God: therefore David inscribed it to Solomon, as an incitement to bespeak his attention to the laws of God, and to point out more especially those instances of the excellency of his kingdom by which it differed from all other kingdoms of the world: which leads him in most of the expressions of it to comprehend the blessings of the reign of the Messiah.

Psalm LXXII.

Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son.

A petition in consequence of what is said in the second Psalm, *Be wise now therefore, O ye Kings: be instructed, ye Judges of the earth.*

Give the King, O God, an understanding of the wisdom of thy moral precepts, and unto the King's son the knowledge of the spiritual laws of the righteousness of thy kingdom, with a disposition to live according to them.

He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

He being enlightened and directed in his actions by his attention to thy holy laws, in preference to all the false measures of worldly policies, he shall judge his subjects as being thy people according to righteousness, and thy poor, the meek, and humble, and afflicted persons of the earth, with judgment derived from thy holy word.

The

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

They who are exalted as rulers under him shall also bring peace to the people by ministering to them according to truth; and all the inferior ranks of men shall conspire in the same design of promoting peace among each other, by living in righteousness.

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

His regard will be shewn particularly in giving righteous judgment for the poor of the people; he shall save the children of the needy who are least able or inclined to contend for themselves in this world, and he will bruise down their oppressor.

They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

These who are the subjects of thy spiritual kingdom, converted by thy doctrine to the true faith in thee the mighty Prince of Peace, they shall fear thee from generation to generation of the faithful descending from them.

He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

The gentle and peaceful blessings of his kingdom, shall descend upon the wearied and afflicted persons of the earth like refreshing rain to the grass that has been eaten close, or cropped down to the root, or like showers to the thirsty earth.

In his days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.

In the days of his reign, when the spiritual laws of his government are observed, the righteous shall flourish when the wicked, their oppressors, are cast down, and instead of wars and contentions in strife, abundance of peace shall ensue, to last as long as the moon endureth.

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

The

The limits of his dominion shall not be circumscribed by any other boundaries, but those of the earth itself.

They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him : and his enemies shall lick the dust.

They who have lived far removed from instruction in the ways of a civil or religious life, shall receive the lessons of his wisdom, and bow down before his majesty, and his enemies, no longer able to make opposition, shall be trodden down to lick the dust.

The Kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents: the Kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

The Kings of the earth who are possessed of the richest treasures, they of Tarshish, and of the Isles, and of Sheba and Seba coming into thy church, shall bring presents of their sons and daughters, and offer gifts unto thee.

Yea, all Kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him.

When all the policies of human invention, and the forms of their civil constitutions are dissolved, being found insufficient, upon the utmost trial that could be made, to support themselves, or to establish peace upon earth; all the Princes of the earth shall bow down to him as the King of Kings, and all nations shall acknowledge him the Prince of Peace.

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth: the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

For by his mercy, which will extend to all the wants of his subjects, he will deliver the needy when he crieth, and the afflicted who has no helper to befriend him while he lives under the power of the worldly Princes of the earth.

He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

He shall be tender of the poor and needy in whatever concerns their bodies or minds, and by communicating his wisdom to those who acknowledge themselves to be in want of it, he shall save the souls of the poor.

He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence : and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

He shall redeem by the price of his own life their soul from the deceits, and lies, and violence of the oppressor, the enemy of their souls ; and dear shall their blood be in his sight, that he shall shed his own to redeem it.

And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba ; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.

And after finishing the redemption of the poor man, by dying for him, he shall live ; (Heb.) and he will give him of the gold of Sheba by the riches of his instruction, and he will pray for him always, by mediating on his behalf, and the whole day of his continuance upon earth he will bless him.

There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains ; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the field.

There shall be an handful of corn cast into the earth on the head of the mountains by our Lord the Messiah, who went up into a mountain, and sowed the seed of his gospel among his disciples, in his divine sermon on that mountain, the fruit of which shall rise up, like the forest of Lebanon, in fulness of strength, to resist the rage of the winds, shaking it with a mighty noise in the storms of persecution. And they who are the fruit of it shall flourish (Heb.) from the city (Isaiah ii. 3.) of Jerusalem, like grass of the earth, covering beautifully all the surface of it.

His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed.

His name shall be everlasting, his name (Heb.) shall have sons, being propagated by descent to his followers called after it Christians, from whence it shall endure as long as the sun. All nations shall be blessed in

in him, by the mercy of God derived to them through his merits, and they shall call him blessed.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things ; (Heb.) doing wondrous things alone.

And blessed be his glorious name for ever, (Heb.) blessed be the name of his glory for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.

The Prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended.

From this abundant testimony of David referring in these and in many other Psalms to the reign of the Messiah, as established in opposition to the temporal power of the Princes of the earth, who held their kingdoms without respect or obedience to the spiritual government of God by his Son our Lord the Christ, it appears how evidently he declared the power and policies of that kingdom which is everlasting before his face, having seen thoroughly into the whole order and extent of it; and as he held his own kingdom over the people of God in due acknowledgment and obedience to the spiritual laws of the kingdom of the Messiah, upon these principles of his government the prophet declared unto David,

Thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee ; thy throne shall be established for ever.

The Psalms of David are to be considered, not only as prophetic records of those revolutions which were to ensue in the several states and kingdoms of the world in consequence of the decree or counsel of God concerning the reign of his son our Lord the Messiah ; but they declare also and publish those very laws which our Lord the Son of David did establish by the authority of his almighty power. To confirm this observation, the rules by which David himself did govern, may be compared with the instructions given by our Saviour in his gospel.

As for instance we may take the
C^{Ist} Psalm.

I will sing of mercy and judgment : unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave unto me.

Or more strictly according to the Hebrew,

I will not place before mine eyes the word of Belial to do according to it: the word or counsel of those who turn aside from truth, I hate, it shall not take hold, or be found in me.

A froward heart shall depart from me, I will not know a wicked person.

Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off:

Him that hath an high look, and a proud heart will not I suffer.

Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the Land, that they may dwell with me.

He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

I will early destroy all the wicked in the land: that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

From these declarations made by David, concerning the purposes of his own life, and particularly in regard to the persons whom he would consent to take into his trust and confidence, we see that his choice of them was made by considering their characters as approved in the sight of God; and that such only became intitled to his favour, who were the servants of God in faithfulness and truth, in meekness and humility, without hypocrisy and dissimulation, and the worldly craftiness of cunning designs; which are the qualities that have usually recommended servants to the confidence of the unbelieving or heathen princes of the world; as being the fittest instruments for supporting the state of their kingdoms, which have been upheld by considerations of temporal interest, and address made thereby to the appetites and passions of mankind.

As the kingdom of David was not founded upon the principles that supported the kingdoms of this world, but upon the principle of faith in the true God, ordering and directing all events by the spiritual interposition of his almighty power and providence, through our Lord the Messiah, this kingdom was the same in its laws and polices which was established by our Lord Jesus Christ, who tells us, *his-kingdom is not of this world*; that is, it is not founded on the temporal power, compacts, or confederacies of men in this world, but on the spiritual and eternal power of God, and therefore his kingdom is everlasting, and his throne is established for ever.

We might proceed much farther in observations upon the Psalms, to shew their perfect correspondence with the gospel of Christ, in relating the history of his life, and death, and resurrection, by the spirit of prophecy, in like manner as we find it afterwards delivered by the Apostles, the witnesses and historians of his life and conversation upon earth; but this purpose is answered by the choice and application of proper Psalms respecting those great events, which are commemorated on the anniversary festivals of our established church.

The remaining Psalms, which do not refer to those great articles of the Christian faith, are to be considered under different heads of instruction, of reproof, and exhortation, as supplications for pardon, penitential addresses, comforts and assurances of mercy to repenting sinners, which are all of them perfectly agreeable to the refined and spiritual doctrine and morality delivered by our Lord and his disciples, the founders of the Christian church.

Upon these accounts there are very frequent appeals made to them in the writings of the New Testament, by the Evangelists in their historical relations of our Lord's ministry and sufferings, and in the epistles, particularly by St. Paul in his arguments for the conviction of Jewish unbelievers; but most remarkably by our Lord himself after his resurrection, when he gave

his last interview and instructions to his Apostles immediately before his ascension into heaven, Luke xxiv. 44.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures, and he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

This discourse of our Lord was designed to prevent any surprize or astonishment in his disciples then beholding him, after he was risen from the dead; and therefore to compose their minds, and to set them free from any sudden emotion of joy or wonder, that they might be attentive to his words, he desires that they would recollect what he had said upon former occasions of his conversing with them, before he was parted from them by his death; that he had expressly declared to them, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him.

Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures; that they might consider those passages of them which referred to him, as the history of his life, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

According to the fullness and all-sufficiency of divine wisdom, power, and prescience, the prophecies, dictated by the holy Spirit of God, are to be considered as historical relations of those events which are declared by them, coming as certainly to pass as if they were already transacted: and therefore under this view of what

is written concerning Christ in the prophetic records, and in the Psalms, so ought Christ to have suffered as he had done, and to rise from the dead the third day; and then in consequence, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem as the prophets had foretold: then he adds, *Ye are witnesses of all these things*, not of such matters as ye had no cause or warning to expect, but ye are witnesses to prove the correspondence between the actions of my life, the sufferings and death I underwent, and my resurrection on the third day, with the accounts of these things delivered by Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me; and also of that publication of my gospel containing the promises of eternal life upon repentance and remission of sins granted to all nations of the world in my name, which has been particularly foretold would begin at Jerusalem, as Isaiah hath declared, Isaiah ii. 3.—*for out of SION shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from JERUSALEM*: that spiritual law and word of the Lord is hereby distinguished from the law delivered on mount Sinai, and therefore takes place of it, because a more full and perfect revelation of the Will of God is contained in the gospel, than what was delivered in the moral law of the ten commandments, which was preparatory to it.

When we consider the Psalms of David in this light, as the records of the spiritual laws of his kingdom, and that these are the same laws which are established by the gospel of Christ; we are from hence taught to acknowledge our Lord in this respect as the son of David, possessing the throne of his kingdom under the same power and authority by which David held it, according to the attestation of Isaiah, describing the human and divine nature of the Messiah the son of David, Isaiah ix. 6, 7. and in consequence of this revelation by divine command, declaring, *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and*

to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

S E C T. VIII.

The Reign of SOLOMON.

IT has been already observed that David, before his decease, did deliver into the hands of Solomon his son the kingdom over Israel in peace, with all advantages of temporal power that could be desired to confirm and establish him in the throne. For as the reign of Solomon is recorded in Holy Scripture to be an example of the utmost perfection that could be given, according to the law of nature, for the establishment of the temporal power and policy of his kingdom, he was exalted, in these respects of worldly power and policy, above any other of the Kings who have reigned in the world; being more eminently distinguished for his wealth, and his power, and his wisdom, in the age in which he lived, than any other Prince has been, or will be among his cotemporaries.

To this purpose, the peculiar favours of God's blessing to Solomon are particularly mentioned in the sacred writings.

In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee, and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant King instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people,

people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the Kings like unto thee, all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

It appears from the terms of this petition made by Solomon, that he asked of God that political wisdom and discernment which might qualify him in the best manner for sustaining the burthen of that government which was then placed upon him; and as he did not rely upon his own capacity to *discern between good and bad* men, or between good and bad measures of administration, but in these respects in which worldly politicians are fain to confide in the sagacity and prudence of their own understandings, in the choice of their men and of their measures, this wise King did wholly address himself to obtain instruction from the fountain of divine wisdom, and hereby made an acknowledgment that he desired to rule his people according to the counsel of God, and on this account esteemed an understanding heart, to *discern between good and bad*, to be a gift preferable to all external benefits of worldly prosperity, his request was therefore graciously accepted, *And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children*

of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt, for he was wiser than all men.

But besides this excellent gift of God, by which Solomon was made superior to all other princes of the world, he was yet in other respects exalted above them, by the external advantages and ornaments of his kingdom; in the wonderful magnificence and elegance of his buildings, in the exceeding abundance of his treasures, in gold, and silver, and precious stones, with all sorts of furniture, and vessels of curious arts and devices; in the domestic order and œconomy of his court, of his officers and attendants, in the multitudes of his horsemen and horses and chariots, together with the continual supplies necessary for their support and maintenance. In all these articles his wisdom and prosperity did far excel the royal state of all other princes then living upon earth.

To which account we may bring the testimony of one of them, his cotemporary; for the Queen of the South came to his court, to be a witness of his great prosperity; and when she *had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her,* by her astonishment at these shews of royal splendor, far beyond her experience in worldly grandeur and magnificence.

But farther, the mark of divine favour, which was peculiarly reserved for Solomon, that he should build the house for the name of the Lord, which was an honour he had refused to grant unto the earnest purpose and desire of David his father; was a circumstance of great consequence in adding to the dignity and lustre of Solomon's reign, when that wonderful building of the temple was compleated, with all orders and appointments necessary for its service.

From these reflections it will follow, that, according to the principles of the law of nature, providing for the

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gratification of the natural desires, appetites, and opinions of mankind, nothing that human wisdom could require, was wanting to compleat the temporal felicity of the reign of Solomon ; and, of course, to retain him and his subjects in obedience to the laws of God, from whom he and they, by these sensible proofs, were bound to acknowledge their happiness and prosperity were derived.

We must observe yet farther, that no temptation could be reasonably taken from the shews or ceremonies of heathen worship, to betray the Israelites into the service of false gods ; for at this time the worship of the true God did, by his special appointment, excel in outward shew and magnificence all the forms of idolatrous worship then practised among the nations.

In succeeding ages of the world, idol-worship was enriched and embellished by numberless inventions, set up in opposition to the worship of the true God under the Jewish dispensation, yet so far coinciding with it, as to proceed the greatest lengths, that the fancies or imaginations, and the wealth of the heathen nations could afford, in testifying the honour they gave to their fictitious divinities, by the external order, solemnities, and expences of that service or worship they offered to them.

To this purpose we may reckon the sumptuous courts and temples, with their ornaments, and appointments of festival solemnities, consecrated to the gods of the heathen world : and in these matters the heathen temples are properly to be considered as imitations, or partial transcripts of the temple and buildings of Solomon.

From whence the enemy of true religion, by a sort of retaliation, found his advantage, to retain the votaries of idolatry in his service, by the love of pomp and pageantry attending it, when the true God, by the preaching of his son, called them and the Israelites off from their attendance of divine worship, confined to one particular place, with external rites and ceremonies,

nies, that they might worship God with internal holiness and purity in spirit and in truth, according to the simplicity of the gospel revelation.

The princely acts of Solomon were chiefly confined to the sumptuous works of his buildings, and to the appointments of order and œconomy among his officers and servants; and during that leisure he enjoyed from the toils of war, and the perplexities of troubled counsels in political negotiations and projects, which have usually employed the time and the thoughts of most other princes of the world, Solomon busied himself in giving proof of that excellent wisdom and understanding, with which he was endued by the gift and grace of God. In witness whereof we have his Proverbs, which are full of knowledge, derived from the most accurate observation and experience of mankind; and with spiritual wisdom also, in an especial manner communicated to him, and enforced by the example of his father David, whom he was exhorted to imitate, and by whose inspired writings, and the instructions given to himself, he had the best pattern laid before him of spiritual perfection and righteousness.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the argument from experience is handled at large, with the greatest perspicuity, and with all advantages to give it full force and conviction to the minds of men, to wean their affections from this world by considering the vanity of it.

If such an argument could be successful to disengage the hearts of men from the love and admiration of the world, and of the things that are in the world, it is to be derived from the experience and observations of Solomon. So it may seem unnecessary for any other man to insist upon it, as from his own authority or invention; *For what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done*, to much better purpose; and therefore the topic is to be changed, and our attention given to what has been said by a greater than Solomon, who has enjoined us by his Apostle, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world:*

world : for if any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him. This is the last, and the only conclusive argument, that can be offered for that end.

The reign of Solomon was peaceful, without interruption, until towards the latter end of it, when he provoked God by his apostacy to raise up enemies to his prosperity : but so long as he continued faithful to the true God, his kingdom was an emblem or representation of that glorious state of happiness which the people of God will enjoy, when all opposition is removed, and absolute obedience and submission is made to the spiritual laws of the kingdom of God, who will reign in the fullness of all power and majesty, by our Lord the Messiah being confessed and acknowledged *the Prince of Peace* ; of which happy change, from the present disorders and disturbances of the earth, arising from the wickedness of men, and the false views and interests of contending princes or worldly potentates, we have a prophetic image and description laid before us in Psalm lxxii.

It comes now in our way to observe, according to the order of sacred history, by what means the temporal happiness and prosperity of the kingdom over Israel came to its final period, by the rejection of Solomon and of his descendants from possessing the throne over the people of God. For this event immediately followed after Solomon's apostacy, that he and his children did forfeit all God's promises for the continuance of their TEMPORAL peace and security. Of this Solomon had warning given to him, by a particular revelation vouchsafed for this purpose, which was made at such time, and with such circumstances of address to him, as might leave the greatest impression upon his mind, to retain and to observe the importance of it.

i Kings, IX.

And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire that he was pleased to do, that the Lord ap-

peared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.

And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments; then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

But if you shall at all turn from following me, you or your children, and will not keep my commandments, and my statutes, which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people: And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house?

And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them; therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil.

It is to be observed, that this prophetic declaration was made to Solomon at that time when he had accomplished, according to his purpose, those great designs which he had undertaken; having finished the building of the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, he was now seated upon the throne of his kingdom, attended with every circumstance of outward prosperity, to support him in the enjoyment of it with royal splendor and magnificence.

So that the warning which was then given to him to preserve him in his duty to God, may be deemed to come at the most proper season, to impress it upon his mind, when his worldly felicity was at the highest degree; and therefore it was reasonable he should then be most attentive to the means of preserving himself from falling from it. And what is yet farther remarkable in this prophetic denunciation to Solomon, the great offence is specified, and particularly pointed out to him, by which he would incur the forfeiture of his kingdom for himself and his posterity; and the most alarming considerations are laid before him in a clear description of those dreadful calamities, which came upon his house, and upon the whole nation of Israel, in consequence of his disobedience unto God, and of his apostacy in worshipping false gods.

1 Kings XI.

But King Solomon loved many strange women (together with the daughter of Pharaoh), women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go into them, neither shall they come in unto you; for surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

And he had seven hundred wives princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart: For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites.

And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.

Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem; and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

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But if you shall at all turn from following me, you or your children, and will not keep my commandments, and my statutes, which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people: And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house?

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And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.

Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem; and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

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And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense, and sacrificed unto their gods.

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other Gods : but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

Wherefore the Lord Said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant, and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake : but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom ; but will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, which I have chosen.

At this period the trial was finally concluded, which God was pleased to make of the nation of Israel and their king, for retaining them as an example to all other nations of the earth, in obedience to his will, according to the principles of the LAW of NATURE.

All the promises of God concerning the temporal power and prosperity of the nation of Israel were now recalled, and absolutely forfeited by their breach of the covenant, through the apostacy of Solomon, and the consequent infidelity and idolatry of that people, who were at this time rejected, according to the purpose and declaration of divine counsel made to them ; and they were from henceforward deprived of that support and protection, for maintaining their worldly happiness and security, which they had found on all occasions in the preservation of their state, in defiance of their enemies, so long as they and their king continued faithful in performing their part of the covenant, which God had established with them and their fathers.

In the succeeding history of the Jewish nation, as it is delivered in the sacred records, our attention henceforward

forward is to be given, to observe the methods of divine providence in preserving the tribe of Judah, as the instrument of conveying God's mercy to all mankind, by a NEW COVENANT, a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

S E C T. IX.

The Arguments of St. Paul to the Jews from Prophecy.

BUT before we proceed farther towards the discovery of the benefits of the gospel revelation, it may be useful to make some reflections upon that dispensation of divine wisdom, contained in the law given by Moses, which was changed for a more perfect law, as the Apostle has observed in arguing upon this point, to convert the Hebrews to the faith in Christ by his gospel; *for there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*

From these words of the Apostle, asserting that the law was set aside for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, it becomes necessary to enquire how it came to pass, that the commandment, or Jewish dispensation, was weak and unprofitable; or, which is to the same effect, upon what account the moral and ceremonial law delivered by Moses was unequal and insufficient to the purposes proposed by it, for retaining the nation of Israel, the peculiar people of God, in faithfulness and obedience to him.

The answer to this difficult question is suggested also by the same Apostle: *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope (did).* The law was an introduction to a more perfect form of discipline and instruction, *by the which we draw nigh unto God.* For if that first covenant had been faultless, that is, had it been sufficient to the great purpose of bringing those who lived

lived under it nigh unto God, then should no place have been sought for the second. There never would have been any change made of the first covenant; but because it was weak and unprofitable to retain them who were under it in their duty to God, and in the enjoyment of his favour by their obedience; therefore it was disannulled, or set aside, to give place to a more perfect dispensation or discovery of the will of God to all mankind, a promise of which is first given to the nation of Israel.

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a NEW covenant with the house of Israel and to the house of Judah :

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts : and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people : and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me from the least to the greatest ; for I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

It is to be observed, that in this epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, the whole argument of controversy between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, is accurately and most admirably handled and discussed, by the several parts of the first covenant being compared with the corresponding parts or members of the second covenant; and the whole weight and authority of what the Apostle has said for the conviction of his brethren of the Jewish nation, is laid upon clear applications of the prophetic records in their hands, giving warning to them of a change, and of a NEW covenant that was to take place of the law, and of the first covenant made
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with their fathers, on account of the weakness and unprofitableness of it.

In the words now quoted from that Epistle, which are taken by the Apostle from the prophecy of Jeremiah, we see an evident declaration is made by God to his people, that he will make a NEW covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah : for all the dispersed tribes of Israel, scattered and undistinguished among the nations, shall with them be called into this new covenant, together with the house of Judah.

And he shews the reason of making this new covenant, by setting forth the difference between the two; for the NEW one is *not according to the covenant I made with their fathers* : it is not of that temper and spirit, such as Moses described, Deutero. xxxiii. 2. when he spake of the Lord delivering the law in most solemn and awful majesty ; *And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them ; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints ; from his right hand went a fiery law, (or a FIRE of law) for them, to burn up and consume them who did not strictly observe it ; in the day when the Lord took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt, when he conducted them by a mighty hand and stretched-out arm, and rescued them by force out of slavery and subjection to their enemies.*

But the new covenant shall not be attended with such outward ensigns of terror and dreadful majesty, as appeared on Mount Sinai ; for these have been found ineffectual to the ends proposed by them ; *because, on full trial that has been made of this people, they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord* : or, as it is in the words of Jeremiah, literally, (because they made vain my covenant, and I did lord it over them) governing with rigour, according to the offences they committed against my law.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws

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laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts. So that instead of ordering their lives according to the letter of the written law given by Moses, and preserved in characters on tables of stone, *I will put my laws into their mind, by informing their understandings with divine and spiritual laws, and write them in their hearts,* to become there a fixed and invariable principle of action. *And I will be to them a God ; not a lord, to rule over them with severity, according to the rigour of the law, denouncing death to the offenders against it, but a merciful God, to accept of repentance for their transgressions ; and they shall be to me a people, purified, and zealous of good works, from the internal purity of their hearts.*

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for after the full discovery of the will of God conveyed by the new covenant, there will be no more occasion to prevent any danger from idolatry, that they should put one another in mind of knowing or abiding faithful to the name of the Lord ; *For all shall know me from the least to the greatest ;* and in this knowledge they shall be retained by the gracious promises made to them in that covenant ; *For I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.* Which corresponds to the words of Isaiah, lix. 20. quoted also to this same purpose by St. Paul, *There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

To add yet farther to this evident declaration of the prophet, the very term of the NEW covenant plainly implies a removal of the former one ; *For in that he saith a NEW covenant, he hath made the first OLD : now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.*

S E C T. X.

*The Examination and Discussion of the LAW of
NATURE.*

WE may be now enabled, through the light of divine revelation, to give a clear account and solution of those perplexities and difficulties, insuperable to the unassisted reason of mankind, which their minds have laboured under in search of truth, by their unwearied endeavours to establish the LAW of NATURE as a rule of life, to which all their actions should be ordered in the attainment of happiness, by the perfection of their nature in its present state.

The great variety of opinions concerning this subject may, at first sight, appear equal to the several different sects of philosophers, lawgivers, and founders of religious and moral discipline, which have appeared in the successive ages of the world: but, on nearer examination, it is found, that there have been almost so many men who have delivered their sentiments concerning it, so many minds differing in their views and considerations, in their descriptions or definitions of this law, in regard to its origin, its extent and obligations, its authority and sanctions.

In the heathen world, we are told by a very learned and industrious philosopher, that there were no less than two hundred and eighty-eight different sentiments about the *summum bonum*, or the final happiness and end of man; and this variety of opinions did necessarily infer a corresponding variety of religious and moral systems in their compositions or descriptions of the Law of Nature.

But although the gospel revelation has precluded all doubtfulness and obscurity concerning the final happiness and the end of man; yet the perplexed and doubtful reasonings about the Law of Nature have still con-

tinued : and it is not yet agreed upon, among the ablest writers in defence of it, what that system or body of law is, which ought properly to be called the LAW of NATURE.

One thing is agreed upon among all philosophers and lawgivers, divines and moralists, that there is a Law of Nature ; but what this rule of action does prescribe, how it may be known and ascertained, and in what the force and power of its obligation does consist ; whether it is a perfect or a defective rule for the conduct of our lives ; all these particulars are controverted and disputed, and still continue to afford an endless subject-matter of contest, between the different parties who are engaged about it.

To clear our way through these difficulties, we have information from the word of God, whence we may learn, by what means this great uncertainty and obscurity in the Law of Nature was introduced, and how this darkness did so long prevail over the understandings of men.

For this purpose we must observe, from divine revelation, that the LAW of NATURE was varied according to the different states or conditions of mankind.

In the state of innocence in which man was formed for his happiness in this world, he was blessed with the LIGHT of NATURE by the KNOWLEDGE of God, who did communicate such information to his understanding, as qualified him for the discharge of his duty in observing the perfect LAW of his NATURE, by obedience to the COMMAND of God, in perpetual testimony of his relation and dependance upon him, by his FAITH or belief in his WORD.

When the first man violated that COMMAND of God, by his disobedience to it, he fell from the perfect LAW of his NATURE, being no longer intitled to receive divine knowledge and instruction by the WORD of God, or by immediate converse or communication with the Divine Presence ; and from thenceforward he was subjected to that principle of the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD
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and EVIL by his senses, which he had introduced by his transgression ; so that, after his apostacy and rebellion, this knowledge of good and evil became the leading motive or principle of his actions, and gave birth to the LAW of his fallen and sinful, or corrupted NATURE ; and therefore this law, derived from that false principle of life or happiness, is opposed to the law of his mind or understanding, enlightened and informed by the word of God.

It is not to be questioned as a matter of uncertainty, whether the knowledge of the One Lord God was traditionally delivered in the antediluvian world ; for it appears, from circumstances confirming it in the sacred history, that it was propagated from the first man to his descendants ; and by their longevity, the account of the fall of man, and the promise of his recovery, were derived in traditional history, through a few persons, unto the patriarch Noah and his sons.

So that in this period of the world, from the fall of man unto the general deluge, mankind had, under the best circumstances and assurances of credibility by tradition, the knowledge of one God, and the account of the first man's disobedience to him, with the loss of happiness in consequence of it, and also the hope of his recovery by the promise of God. They had all these principles of true religion to begin with, and from thence to derive, by their own reasonings upon them, a Religion, or a Law of Nature.

We have but little information from divine authority, to know what conclusions they made from these principles, or to be satisfied in what manner these first inhabitants of the earth did address themselves unto God, or by what methods they preserved the order of society : but we are told, after the birth of Enos, *Then began men to call upon the NAME of the Lord.* By which it may reasonably be supposed, that at this time congregations or assemblies of men did meet together, to call upon the name of the Lord, in some form of religious worship ; and such persons who did join for

this purpose, to acknowledge their dependance and respect to the name of the Lord their Creator, we may justly suppose, are they who are called in the sacred style *the sons of God*.

We have a like foundation to be assured, that in those early days of the world, there was also a part of the inhabitants of it, who did not join in the worship of God, but lived as wicked men of the world do, having no honour or respect for the name or service of God; for this distinction is plainly intimated, when it is said in the sacred text, *that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all they chose*.

And so, according to the same method, by which idolatry was afterwards propagated among the peculiar people of God, the sons of God, or the believers in his name, were seduced to infidelity by the daughters of men; for *there were giants in the earth in those days; fierce men, of violent and despotic rule, as the original expression signifies such persons, who made others bow or fall down before them by strength of hand*.

And also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children unto them, the same became mighty men, which were of old men of renown.

That is, the children born of such marriages took the examples of those tyrannical and violent men, to follow after them, and so became men of renown, or men of a name much dreaded of old.

Hence it follows, in the order of sacred history, *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually: And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth; and the earth was filled with violence*.

The history of mankind in this period, from the creation unto the flood, does exhibit a summary view of that fruit which arose from their reasonings upon the LAW of their NATURE.

It

It has been already observed, that the principles of true religion were known, and delivered down with the greatest advantage in traditional history, through the generations of men in the antediluvian state: also, that there were believers in God, who did call upon his NAME, and were therefore distinguished as *the sons of God*, from other men, who did not acknowledge or give honour to his name.

But the sons of God were quickly corrupted, and led astray from the law of their mind or understanding, to follow the Law of Nature corrupted, and to seek for their happiness, according to the ways of the men of this world, by enjoyment of the pleasures and gratifications of their sensual desires.

So that the conclusion which follows from this trial of mankind, is to this effect; that they could not be preserved in obedience to God, and in the observance of moral duties, by the Law of Nature, although they had the principles of true religion made known to them with greater certainty and assurance, and with a more extensive view of their condition and dependance, than any other generations of men, who have lived since the conclusion of that state, could have by the same means; that is, by the joint assistance of tradition and of their own reasonings, from long experience, by observations made upon the works of God.

It does not appear from the sacred history, that the inhabitants of the earth before the flood had been guilty of idolatry; for traditional history conveyed the knowledge of the true God by a very few persons from Adam unto Noah, the father of the new world, and by the evidence or clearness of it, did prevent the understandings of men from being misled to idols, or visible objects of worship. But the corruption of the antediluvian age appears to be such as is to be found in the latter days, in which men are infidels, though they are not idolaters, being wholly busied about the affairs or interests, the pleasures or honours of this life; for *their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever,*

and their dwelling-places to all generations ; they call their lands after their own names.

Whole nations of men, as well as individuals, who are eager and intent upon the world, and by their application have been successful in it ; do presume, upon the stability of human laws and constitutions, to promise to themselves, by their posterity enjoying their labours, a sort of eternity in their names and in their houses ; like those antediluvian patriarchs, who were men of a NAME, and by the strength of nature had then good hopes to arrive at the age of a thousand years, the term which is now taken in worldly affairs to be the same as for ever.

In the next age of the world, commencing from the plantation of it by the sons of Noah, and extending unto the time of the call of Abraham, we are informed, that idolatry was then practised ; for the knowledge of the true and invisible God grew obscure in a few ages after the flood, the traditionary evidence of it being diminished, in proportion to the increase of the witnesses in succession, by the lives of men being shortened in the postdiluvian world : so that in the space of three hundred and fifty years after the flood, about which time Abraham, the ninth in lineal descent from Shem, was born, idolatry was introduced, and taken into the Law of Nature ; and Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor, the ancestors of the Jewish nation, were idolaters, according to the declaration of Joshua to the people of Israel : *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time ; even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor, they served other gods.*

It is not material to our purpose to make conjectures what gods these were that they served, or by whom the objects of false and idolatrous worship were first introduced. It is probable they were the descendants of Ham, who fell off from the acknowledgment of the true

true God, whom Noah the preacher of righteousness did worship; for as he had cursed Ham for his undutiful behaviour, his children may be supposed to have been the first who departed from the worship of the God of Noah.

At this period, before the call of Abraham, the Religion of Nature, and the Law of Nature did coincide, as derived from the same principle; for mankind, by their corrupted nature, were subjected to the knowledge of good and evil, which by sin was introduced as a principle of life; and in pursuit of their happiness, according to that false principle, they were disposed to seek for it in this life, by the use and application of outward visible objects, gratifying their sensual desires; whence it naturally followed, according to the course of their own reasonings, that since they found themselves dependent on outward objects for their happiness in this world, they would be tempted to worship such visible parts, or bodies, or such powers in it, as they might imagine had authority or influence to procure for them those blessings or advantages they always stood in need of for their well-being in this life.

Hence it appears, according to experience of what mankind have done, and also according to strict argument from the principle upon which their designs for happiness in this world are formed, that what is properly to be called the RELIGION of NATURE, or the LAW of our NATURE, in its fallen state, unassisted by divine revelation, has, for the object of religious worship, a FALSE GOD, or FALSE GODS, and for the immediate end of the law, the HAPPINESS OF THIS LIFE.

To this we may add, that whatever hopes they had in the heathen world of happiness in a future state, they arose also from the same principle, suggesting a reward hereafter as due to them who were exemplary in their behaviour, and benevolent in their actions, by promoting the peace and good order, and temporal welfare of that society with which they were connected; and as such worthy persons were often injuriously treated

ed in this world, the Elysian fields were opened for their reception by the imaginations of contemplative men, who spake accordingly of that merit by which their blessedness was to be obtained, as the poet has described it,

Hic manus ob patriam pugnando vulnera passi,
 Quique sacerdotes casti dum vita manebat,
 Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti,
 Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere perartes,
 Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo.

To which agrees also the general description of their guilt, who were condemned to the punishment of a future state in Tartarus.

Hic quibus invisi fratres dum vita manebat,
 Pulsatusve parens, & fraus inexta clienti,
 Aut qui divitiis soli incubuere repertis,
 Nec partem posuere suis, quæ maxima turba est,
 Quique ab adulterio cæsi, quique arma secuti
 Impia, nec veriti dominorum fallere dextras,
 Inclusi pœnam expectant.

Here it may be proper to take notice, that from the general use of sacrifices in the heathen world, it might seem as if this institution were derived or dictated by the Law of Nature; but from what has been already observed concerning that transaction by which the skins of animals were taken to clothe the bodies of our first parents, it is reasonable to suppose they had then instruction given to them by divine counsel, to consider the blood of the animals, which were slain on that occasion, as shed to express the guilt of their transgression; and, in that light, to look upon it as a covering for their spiritual nakedness, when they did, by the like act in sacrificing, make confession of their sin: so that at the same time their naked bodies were clothed, they were taught also to provide a covering for their souls, which, by their guilt, were become destitute of divine comfort and assistance. This covering was provided,
 on

on the part of the offender, by his confession and repentance signified by the offering in sacrifice ; and on God's part it was provided, and accepted, as it was appointed by his institution, to foreshew that sacrifice for sin, by which the whole world was to be reconciled unto him.

There is yet farther proof to confirm our supposition that the rite of sacrificing was instituted at the time we have mentioned, because the next great offence which is recorded after the Fall was in consequence of that institution ; as it appears to have given the occasion of the murder of Abel, by Cain his brother, according to the light of sacred history ; for of these it is said, that

Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering : but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.

The Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering, as it was of the Lord's designation and appointment offered by Abel, not only as a gift unto God of the best of his flock, with the fat thereof, but sacrificed in acknowledgment of his sins, for the guilt whereof he judged himself worthy of death in place of that creature whose blood he shed as a token of this confession, in hope of the mercy of God according to his promise ; which corresponds with the Apostle's observation, that *by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.* For the offering Cain brought was of the fruit of the ground, of which there is no appearance at this time of any command to make an offering unto the Lord ; but Cain offered it upon a supposition of his own invention, that what he took of his own goods freely, and made a gift of it unto the Lord, it would answer the same intention as the sacrifice of an animal, to find favour thereby with God.

Here

Here we find, in this offering of Cain, the original design of all the sacrifices and oblations in the heathen world; which were offered to their false gods under the notion of gifts, to appease their anger, and to render them propitious to their votaries: an imagination which has been industriously cultivated by the priests and ministers of idol worship, and of the corrupted worship of the true God.

We have yet more light to consider the rite of sacrificing to be of so early and divine institution, from the reproof of Cain, and God's argument with him upon his displeasure conceived against his brother.

And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? If thou doest well in making thy approach unto God as thou oughtest to do, in confession of thy own unworthiness, thou shalt be accepted in thine offering; and if thou doest not well, by offering unto God what he has not required, and for such purpose as he does not approve, sin lieth at the door, and cometh along with thy gift: and to root out of the mind of Cain his resentment against his brother, of whom he had conceived, that, by the favour he had found with God, he might become a greater man in the earth than he; God is pleased to assure him, that of this he was in no danger, for that his brother's desire should be to him, to find favour in his sight, and he should rule over him, and become more powerful in the world than Abel should be.

But as the gift of Cain was brought to find favour with God, that he might give him greater increase from the earth to satisfy his covetousness, we find, that after his envy and his jealousy had wrought upon him to murder his brother, his punishment is made to correspond with his guilt; for as he meant by his offering to obtain plentiful harvests, God cursed him in that respect, as he said unto him, *Now thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood*

blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth, instead of becoming more powerful or prosperous in it.

To conclude our observations upon this ancient rite of sacrificing, we see it came, by divine institution, to be a form of religious worship, after the nature of man was fallen or corrupted by sin: when the knowledge of the true and invisible God became obscure by tradition, and was at length superseded by the invention of false gods substituted in his place, by the wandering imaginations and vain reasonings of mankind, the rite of sacrificing did nevertheless descend by tradition; for the external act of killing and sacrificing an animal by shedding its blood on the earth, and burning its flesh, was not liable to be obscured or mistaken in traditional descent, or delivery of that rite in religious worship. And as the enemy of truth, and of man's redemption and recovery from sin, was aware of this prophetic rite, foreshewing the loss of his power over mankind, it followed naturally from his counsels, that he should abuse, by his artifice and insinuations, the divine purpose of this sacred institution: and so it came to pass, as we have already observed, that the heathens did judge the favourable acceptance of their offerings and sacrifices would arise from the price and costliness of them, as being gifts to their Gods of such things as they themselves esteemed most precious. And from this false conception it came, at length, to be supposed among the heathens, that their gods might delight in human sacrifices, and in those, of such persons whose lives were most dear unto them who did offer them. Thus it was that the Israelites, when they *were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works, they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.*

Such was the corrupted state of mankind, following the law of their nature, depraved and misled from the knowledge

knowledge of the true God, into the worship of false gods, and bound under the slavery of sinful lusts reigning over them without controul, *having no hope, and without God in the world*; when it pleased God, by the call of Abraham, to begin the wonderful work of man's redemption and recovery from the power of sin and death, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This great event was introduced by parts distributed according to divine wisdom, enlightening the human understanding by such degrees of instruction, and ordering the wills of men by such methods of discipline, as were necessary to prepare their minds for the admission of the final revelation of God's mercy and truth, and thereby incline them to receive and to embrace the terms of their happiness and salvation.

The great difficulty in the way of this reformation and recovery of fallen man, did arise from that corrupt principle of life which, by his sin, was introduced; for by it an establishment was given to the Religion of Nature, corrupted and depraved from the knowledge and service of the true God, to the worship of false gods, in such manner, and by such forms and inventions, as the vain imaginations of men did recommend.

By the same principle, a LAW of NATURE, or a rule directing the actions of men towards each other, was framed, according to the different views or models of society: for the Law of Nature, respecting the actions of men, civilized and united into one body, was different of course, in different societies, as to the constitution of particular parts or members of it; but all these laws of nature, or civil institutions for particular societies, howsoever imperfect or inadequate to the purposes of them, did all agree and correspond in one main and ultimate end, to promote the continuance, or political life, or happiness, of that society to which they did respectively belong; and consistently with

with that end to include also the temporal welfare or happiness of each individual belonging to it.

To reform the Religion of Nature from the worship of false gods, by communicating the knowledge of the true God, was the first step taken by him for the redemption of mankind; and this was done by the call of God to Abraham to be the father of the faithful, who are all his sons in the true faith or belief in ONE GOD, the ALMIGHTY GOD, CREATOR of heaven and earth: and the descendants of Abraham, according to the flesh, were preserved in the belief and worship of the true God, to become his instruments for conveying the terms of his salvation to all mankind: and so the faith, or belief in one God, has descended by uninterrupted generation of the faithful from Abraham unto our Lord Jesus Christ, and from him unto all true believers in his NAME.

While the Israelites, the sons of Abraham, continued in Egypt, they began to be corrupted by idolatry; for by taking example from the nation in which they lived, they did join in worshipping false gods with the Egyptians; but before this corruption became universal among them, they were led out of Egypt by Moses, the faithful servant of God; for *by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and as such, to comply with the idolatrous practices of the Egyptian court, chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and so he became, by the peculiar designation of God, his instrument to bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

In that space of time in which the Israelites continued in Egypt, which was four hundred and thirty years, they were a distinct nation separated from the Egyptians; and this separation was made by the difference of their Religion in serving the God of Abraham, in opposition to the idolatry of Egypt; and, in consequence of their idolatrous inventions, it became an abomination to the Egyptians to eat bread with the Hebrews.

But

But as we find the Israelites were accused by Joshua, and more expressly by the prophet Ezekiel, for revolting from the faith in the true God to join themselves with idolaters in Egypt, it followed, according to the wisdom and goodness of God, that he made a more full declaration of himself, of his power, and of his will, to preserve the nation of Israel in their obedience to him.

For this purpose he appeared unto Moses, that he might give deliverance unto his people from their Egyptian servitude; and to invest him with authority to execute this important commission, God was pleased to reveal to him his EXPOUNDED NAME, and made that farther declaration to Moses, which he had not vouchsafed to Abraham, to Isaac, or Jacob; *And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my NAME JEHOVAH was I not known unto them: they had the NAME, but it was not understood by them, because not expounded as it was to Moses at the bush, when God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.*

At this time, when God spake unto Moses at the bush, we may observe that the first discovery was made of the divine counsel, for establishing the religious and political œconomy of the Jewish state, by the prophetic designation of that mountain, on which Moses then stood, to be the place where the divine presence of their Lawgiver was afterwards to be manifested to the nation of Israel.

This circumstance of the place where he stood, is the first object which Moses is commanded to remark; for *when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Which was afterwards explained to him, when he was told,*
When

When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

The miracles which were wrought in conducting that people out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea unto Mount Sinai, by confirming this revelation made to Moses, and the message from God which he brought unto them, did all conspire to enforce the authority by which Moses had spoken in the name of God, and to prepare their minds with due reverence to receive his law delivered from Mount Sinai.

It hath already come in our way to observe concerning the MORAL LAW comprized in the Ten Commandments, taken together with the enlargement or explanations of them, as delivered in the books of Moses, that this law was to be considered as the LAW of NATURE, enjoined by divine authority, giving it the utmost perfection it was capable of under that dispensation. The principle of the knowledge of good and evil by our senses (from whence the corrupted nature of man is ever inclined to derive his happiness in this present state) was taken to be the sanction of that law, which was therefore enforced, and obedience to it required by the most solemn and engaging promises and assurances of temporal blessings, and under the severest penalties and threatnings of temporal punishments.

The ceremonial law is to be regarded, in the political constitution of that state, as designed to preserve the members of it from the infection of their idolatrous neighbours; to which purpose those ordinances of divine service were enjoined, *which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ceremonies imposed on them, until the time of reformation should come*, which was to set aside all those external rites as no longer of any use or significancy; for the observation of them being required of the Israelites, to prevent them from being led astray by the pomps and pageantry of idol worship, these rites and offerings were then of course to cease, when the time of reformation was come, by the clear discovery of the perfect Will of God by our

Lord Jesus Christ; *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* And by the light of his gospel, the lyes and impostures of the devil were banished from possessing the understandings of men; for wherever that divine revelation was published, the oracles of evil spirits were silenced, and their temples neglected.

It is to be observed also, that God was pleased, in condescension to the weaknesses of the human mind, to have respect in the constitution of his law to those prejudices which are apt to take the deepest root in it; and for this reason, as the heathens did conclude, that those gifts which were of the highest price in their own eyes, would be also the most acceptable to the gods they worshipped, and that their anger would be appeased, and their favour obtained by such sort of offerings; hence it was that the Lord God of Israel vouchsafed, by his peculiar designation, to declare what sacrifices and offerings he would accept of, and in what manner they should be presented before him: and upon this account he claimed the first born of the children of his people to be sanctified, or set apart for him.

To conclude these general observations upon the religious and political constitution of the Jewish state, it was secured on all sides by those provisions for the continuance of its peace and temporal prosperity, which, according to our own reasonings, were most likely to produce those effects; for by this dispensation of God's mercy and truth, the understandings of men were enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and by his authority the LAW of NATURE, for the support of human society, was enacted, by the principle of our own self-will taken under his direction, to be made effectual to those ends of society for which all human governments are constituted; the promises of God being absolute upon condition of their obedience, to make the nation of Israel a flourishing and happy people, in defiance of their enemies; and on the other hand, their obstinacy and rebellion was threatened with exemplary

emplary vengeance, to be executed upon them in the face of all the earth.

The various revolutions in the government of that people, and the final rejection of them under the Mosaic dispensation from being any more considered as the peculiar people of God, are fully accounted for in the sacred records of their history, which have already passed under our observation.

But the judgments of God respecting that nation, are yet more fully and clearly set forth and vindicated by the prophets sent to warn them of the calamities which were to befall their state, in the final dissolution of it, and of the first covenant made with their fathers, and established by earthly or worldly promises, and to proclaim also the glad tidings of the gospel-covenant, which was established on better promises.

Before we come to a distinct consideration of the gracious terms of the gospel-covenant, we may reflect a little farther upon what has been observed concerning the Law of Nature, as of a subject very perplexed and intricate, according to those variable accounts and descriptions that have usually been given of it.

The most immediate cause of these difficulties upon due examination will be found to lie in terms of uncertain signification, which are taken without any proper definition to ascertain their meaning, and are held forth as the principles or axioms of a science, in which all persons who are conversant in it are agreed.

If we were to search through the schools of philosophers in the heathen world, we might be able to produce a large catalogue of such sort of words, or technical terms, of doubtful, ambiguous, and variable significations, which have administered abundant exercise for the human mind in contentious arguments and oppositions of science, falsely so called; by which the understandings of men, in reasoning upon religious and moral subjects, have been amused, and perplexed, and bewildered with endless and unprofitable dispute and jangling; which, however, served well for the

time then being, to establish a character for wisdom in the chief masters and teachers of those schools, and to procure an authority for their doctrines and decisions.

Here it may become us to make repeated acknowledgment of due respect and esteem for the characters of those men, who have been eminent for their learned and philosophic enquiries, and were zealous in bringing forth such works, as they did believe would contribute to the improvement and happiness of mankind in those dark ages which were not enlightened by the gospel of Christ: for this sacred doctrine does not in any sort afford us a license to despise or to depreciate their wisdom, who were honoured and revered in the heathen world, as the great friends and reformers of it; the admiration and praise they obtained by their labours, are justly due to their endeavours for that purpose, and to the great advances they made towards truth, by such imperfect notices and informations as they had concerning it: and upon these considerations it may be allowed in justice to some of those venerable names of antiquity, that we have no cause to suppose that any other philosopher of later ages, by having only the same information, would have reasoned more clearly than Socrates, or have written better on religion and morality than Plato and Aristotle.

For this reason the praise which may be due to the venerable sages of antiquity, does infer and very justly calls for a censure upon their labours, who presume now to be reformers and teachers of mankind upon the stock of their own wisdom and authority; as if they had no other discovery or assistance for their direction in discoursing of the Law of Nature, or on moral subjects, than what was afforded by reason or the light of nature to those antient fathers of the heathen philosophy.

But if the modern philosophers do confess to have information by the gospel of Christ, their presumption and fallacy are obnoxious to the censures of Christian believers, while they continue in complaisance only

to alledge the doctrine of Christ as a conspiring or collateral evidence for the truth of what they are pleased to dictate, as if it were from their own understandings.

But to proceed in the consideration of those technical terms that are now most in use in all discourses concerning the Law of Nature; it is said to be discoverable, or to be derived from reason, or right reason, or to arise from the nature or reason of things, or the relations or fitnesses of things; which expressions we may advert upon a little farther, although they have been already discussed in the remarks upon Dr. Clarke's demonstrations.

As every man is supposed to be endued with reason, and from thence to understand the nature, relations, and fitnesses of things, these terms and articles are taken into argument, as if they were perfectly understood and agreed upon among us. But if we come to examine these words more particularly, it will appear they do afford very great latitude for doubt, and uncertainty, and obscurity in our discourses, if their meaning is not fully and clearly ascertained.

The term reason, human reason, or natural reason, is most commonly taken to signify some certain rule or standard in the human mind, which is always ready to be applied for our direction in the ordinary occasions of life; to which if our actions and discourses do agree, we have a right to be approved for them.

This supposition is false, and is not to be admitted, so far, as it implies that a man is naturally possessed of any such rule by way of birthright or inheritance, to which every one is intitled, without his own application and endeavours to acquire it: but a rule of reason, or, more properly, of reasoning, is acquired by the attention given by our minds to outward objects, which are made known to us, by our senses being affected by the various properties or qualities of them; and by experience of these properties we make conclusions, or give our assent to such as are made by o-

ther men, to guide us in the various offices and occurrences of life.

To explain this by example; If we talk of right reason, or reasoning in search of mathematical knowledge, we are warranted to say, our reasoning in the proof of any proposition is right, when it is evidently deduced from those general axioms or principles of that science, which are made known to us by sight, or, as it is called, by intuitive demonstration; and by this instance it follows, that to whatever subject we apply our reason, it must proceed in the course of its action from some certain fixed principle, which is taken to rest the whole process of our reasoning upon it.

If the principle from whence we begin to reason is false, our reasoning of course will be false and fallacious; or if the principle we fix upon be true, our reasoning may be false and defective if we do not use it according to the rules of that art or science to which it is applied: and if both the principle and the method of our reasoning are false and defective, the errors in course will appear proportionably in the conclusions produced by them.

So that when it is said, man is a reasonable creature, the expression properly signifies, that man is a creature capable of receiving, by his understanding, a principle of knowledge; and having a power of applying his mind to act upon that principle, can form conclusions for directing his Will in the discharge of his duty in the various relations and purposes of his life.

According to these observations, we may discern, how it comes to pass that one man excels another in the method or art of his reasoning; which will arise from his having a more distinct and clear apprehension of the principle from whence he begins to reason, and also a greater attention and vigour of mind in pursuing the steps which lead to that conclusion he means to establish.

But to confine our remarks to that object which is now particularly under our consideration with regard

to the Law of Nature, there is one principle common to all mankind, upon which all their arguments concerning that law are necessarily founded; and that is, the knowledge of good and evil by our senses, which, by our corrupted nature, has gained our attention, to become the principle of all our reasonings about our religious and moral conduct or behaviour, independently of divine revelation.

From hence it is easy to see what a large field of reasoning is opened for the human mind, to be exercised in the discovery of all the parts making up the complex system or body of the Law of Nature, which is supposed to contain all those rules that are necessary for our direction, in perfecting our nature, and conducting us to happiness; and as it must needs be, that by having regard to that false principle, the opinions of men would be various in reasoning from it in pursuit of their happiness, we may from hence discern the cause of those perplexities of different sentiments in the heathen world, about what they called the *summum bonum*, the final happiness or end of man.

But as the final happiness and the end of man is now clearly ascertained by the gospel revelation, the perplexity and obscurity now complained of in arguments concerning the Law of Nature, do arise from other causes, into which it concerns us more particularly to examine.

The lawgivers, or moralists, among the civilized nations of the heathen world, in searching after the Law of Nature, argued from a false principle, the falshood of which it was not possible for them to discover without the aid of divine revelation; on which account some of the most enlightened among them did hope that such information from heaven would be granted, as might dissolve those doubts and difficulties that arose in their minds upon religious and moral subjects.

But notwithstanding this assistance has been granted, we labour still under perplexity of discourse and argument

gument about the Law of Nature, and the reason is, that instead of complying with a perfect rule given to us by divine revelation, after a full declaration of the Will of God, which our teacher from heaven hath left for our instruction to conduct us thither, we are still inclined to follow the LAW of NATURE, that is, to seek for our happiness according to the distempered fancies and imaginations of our present fallen and corrupted state.

The most dangerous and deceitful opposition to Christianity, has been made under the name and pretext of explaining, and amending, and establishing the Law of Nature by means of the gospel; and because this design was not thoroughly examined, a suspicion of the imposture has not arisen in the minds of many Christian believers, who have earnestly contended for the Law of Nature, as consistent with, and confirmed by, the Gospel; whereas, the effect of that sacred doctrine is utterly defeated, if it does not supersede and take place of the Law of Nature, to which, as Christians, we are no longer obliged, being now *not under the law, but grace.*

This opposition between the law and grace, as expressed by the Apostle, is not to be considered as respecting only the ceremonial part of the Jewish law, but it extends to the whole covenant of the Mosaical dispensation.

That covenant, which was established by temporal promises, did include the Law of Nature, perfected, explained, and enforced by the motives of worldly happiness and prosperity, according to the natural appetites and passions of mankind in their present corrupted state; which law hath been set aside, after a full trial and conviction of the unprofitableness of it, under all the various forms of government and discipline of the nation of the Jews, whose example, *in the midst of the nations*, is held forth for the instruction of all mankind. And now it hath pleased God of his grace, by his own free mercy and goodness, to give us
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another law in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is not established on earthly promises, nor its obligation enforced by that principle of the knowledge of good and evil by our senses, which was taken into the first covenant, *to convince the world of sin*, and to shew that the word of God is sure in pronouncing death upon the admission of it; and that death did not only extend to the individuals that first sinned, but to all the individuals descending from them, and living by the same principle. And further, that false principle inferred also a dissolution, or political death, of all societies and governments built up or founded upon it. Therefore, on the one hand, no arguments are to be brought from the Law of Nature, to enforce the gospel revelation, as if it did coincide, or were consistent with it; neither, on the other hand, can the purity of the gospel admit of any corrupt mixture with it, by being applied to enforce the Law of Nature, by the sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments, which are peculiar to the spiritual laws of our Lord and Saviour.

But these attempts have been made, by incessant efforts of unwearied contention, to support the LAW of NATURE against FAITH, that is, against the Truth and Word of God; and these endeavours have been clearly foreseen and foretold in his word, giving warning to his servants of the great corruptions and disorders which were to arise from the enemies to his church in the latter days.

From these observations we may be able to discern the tendency of their reasonings and discourses, who mean to place the sum of religion in the discharge of moral or social duties, or in such good works as contribute to our mutual ease or comfort, or happiness in this life; and then conclude, that if we pursue this end with universal good-will and benevolence, we must be finally approved and rewarded by God with eternal happiness in a future state.

This reasoning is false and fallacious, and the conclusion is too hastily drawn, and is not at all to be admitted,

mitted, from the terms which are given by the Deists or Moralists; for the Law of Nature, comprehending all social or moral duties, which they would now recommend as the rule of our practice, is not such as might be derived by our own reasonings from outward sensible objects: for if we had no other guide but our own reason to direct us, our religion would be idolatrous; and our obligations to obey the Law of Nature, would arise from the civil constitution of that society to which we belong; and the hopes of happiness in a future state would be, according to our own imaginations, uncertain, obscure, and doubtful, and would be founded only on the observance of such moral duties, as might be supposed would best contribute to our mutual ease and comfort in this life. Whereas the system of NATURAL RELIGION, so far as it is agreed upon by its abettors, the rational moralizing philosophers of these times, is made to correspond with revealed religion in the word of God, which, when quoted by them, is brought in confirmation, and in the way of explaining or of enlarging the Law of Nature, which is, by their supposition, of prior, absolute, and, as some of them are pleased to say, of eternal obligation, and, in this respect, superior to all revealed religion.

To make out these arbitrary and presumptuous assertions, they assume,

1st. The knowledge of the true God, the LIGHT of NATURE, by laying it down for the foundation of their reasonings, to which article of FAITH they have no title,

2dly. They assume the precepts of the moral law of the two tables from the Jewish dispensation; and for enforcing this law, they appropriate, by their own AUTHORITY, to it, the sanctions of the spiritual law of the gospel revelation.

1. The knowledge of the true God is an article of FAITH: it is not, nor can it be demonstrated by mathematical arguments, as we have already observed on

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Dr. Clarke's endeavours to that purpose : but this article is from divine revelation, traditionally descended from Abraham, and preserved also after the delivery of the law on Mount Sinai, by the tables of the covenant in the ark, which was the repository of the NAME of the Lord, or, as it is called, the ark of the TESTIMONY ; for the two tables of stone, written upon by the finger of God, bare testimony to this great and fundamental truth, upon which the law was established, as delivered by the authority of his name to the nation of Israel. By the peculiar designation of Divine Providence, respecting the government and œconomy of that people, this great article of faith was preserved among them, *of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, who was, by successive generation of the faithful, the son of David, the son of Abraham in the true faith ; and being also *God over all, blessed for ever*, he has given us the last and most perfect exposition of the NAME of God, who is known by the followers and disciples of Christ, by the EXPOUNDED NAME of God, the FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST, in which NAME all Christians are baptized, and by it worship God.

The opposers of this divine revelation, made by the Son of God, find this advantage for the support of their impostures ; that the NAME of ALMIGHTY GOD revealed to the Jews, is readily allowed to them, as if it were of their own invention ; for the God of the Jews, and of the Gentiles converted to christianity, is the same, though known by different names, expounded in their respective dispensations : so that the knowledge of ONE GOD, being universally received by both, is assumed by the adversaries, as if it were discovered to us by our own reasonings, or by the LIGHT of NATURE, as that term is by them falsely and perversely applied.

2. In the next place, the present teachers and abettors of the Law of Nature do assume the precepts of the moral law of the two tables from the Jewish dispensation, and for enforcing this law, they appropriate
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to it, by their own authority, the sanctions of the spiritual law of the gospel revelation.

The teachers of the LAW of NATURE, or, as they are otherwise called, the Moral Philosophers, or Deists, of the late or present times, by the conformity of their dictates to the laws of the Decalogue, illustrated in the gospel, have so far precluded any contest about them, that a Christian must acknowledge them as the laws of society, established after the most perfect model, given by divine authority to the Jewish state. But after this concession is made, we must deny that such plans of moral excellency and perfection, as are now presented to us by these rational philosophers, are to be considered as the genuine fruits of their own improved understandings. They may and do arrogate such glory to themselves, and perhaps we may labour to little purpose, to dispossess them of this happiness in their own imaginations. But to confute and disprove their lofty pretensions, we can prove, by undeniable evidence of appeal to the lives and actions both of the Heathens and Jews, that the knowledge of the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, was not sufficient, when received either by the Gentiles or Jews, to preserve them stedfast in their obedience to the moral law, or the Law of Nature; but that, on the contrary, instead of learning their duty by due course of argument from that principle, as the moral philosophers at present would pretend to do, they did by false reasoning depart from it, and did corrupt, or altogether forsake, the knowledge of the true God; and therefore, to retain mankind in this knowledge, and in their duty consequent upon it, another method of instruction was necessary, which the mercy of God did afford by our Lord Jesus Christ.

To this purpose St. Paul has fully argued in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, as if it were a form of doctrine inferior in excellency or perfection to the moral law given to the Jews, or to the

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Law of Nature among the Gentiles ; *For it is the power of God, manifested in the miraculous establishment of his holy religion unto salvation, as containing the assurance of everlasting happiness to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first called, and also to the Greek ; to every one in the Gentile world, who believeth and liveth according to it.*

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith : for the righteousness of God is revealed, or shewed openly to the world, in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ set forth in his gospel, containing the terms upon which his righteousness, the righteousness of God, will be imputed to us, by believing in God, and believing in him, as our Lord said to his disciples, Ye believe in God, believe also in me as God, which is the condition of salvation revealed from faith to faith ; this being the uniform lesson of instruction throughout the word of God to all mankind, that no person shall be justified, or accounted righteous in the sight of God by his works, and thereby merit eternal life ; but the just shall live by faith, deriving the principle of their spiritual life from the word of God only.

For the wrath of God, denouncing eternal punishment, is revealed from heaven in the gospel of Christ, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, that confess and agree in the knowledge and belief of ONE God, but who hold the truth, this great fundamental principle of religion, in unrighteousness.

This revelation of God's wrath against the unrighteousness of men who hold the truth, is because that which may be known of God, from their own reasoning upon the truth, is manifest in them to their own minds or consciences ; for God hath shewed it unto them, by giving such testimony of himself, through the information of their own senses, exercised among his works, as should preserve them from relapsing into idolatrous worship. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen to those persons who hold the truth, that God created the heavens and the earth. By this

this work of his creation of the world, the invisible things of him are clearly seen, by due course of reasoning and argument, *being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power*, which is implied by his being the Creator of all things, *and Godhead*, in his divine supremacy over them all, as their Lord and Maker.

So that they are without excuse, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that when they knew God, by having his name and his work, as Creator of the world, declared to them, *they glorified him not as God*, by worshipping him only the Lord Creator of heaven and earth; *neither were thankful for his blessings to them in the various comforts of this life, which are all derived from his creatures, and are consequently his gifts; but became vain in their imaginations, directing their worship to other lords, and false gods. And their foolish heart was darkened*, by rejecting the LIGHT OF NATURE, the knowledge of the true God; *professing themselves to be wise and understanding in philosophic enquiries into the powers of nature, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; wherefore, in consequence of this great depravity of mind in those who knew God, and glorified him not as God; but either joined idols with his worship, or gave it up to take false gods in his place, God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God, that truth which is the first and fundamental truth of God, delivered in his holy word, they changed into a lie, by making an idol their god, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen.*

For this cause God gave them over to vile affections, to corrupt themselves in the most abominable lusts; and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, or, according to the force of the original expression,
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even as they did not search, by their reasoning upon the truth, to reject the lyes of idolatry, and to hold or retain the true God in their knowledge, *God gave them over to a reprobate mind*; to such depravity in their understandings, as made them liable to commit the most foul disorders, and to do those things which are not convenient to the nature of man; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despitesful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, who knowing the judgment of God, by their own reasonings in the discovery of the Law of Nature, and giving their consent to, or acknowledging the rule of rectitude in the moral law of God, with the sanction of it, (*that they who do such things are worthy of death*) which is also the sentence passed on such offences by the laws of heathen communities; yet notwithstanding, they not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them.

The difficulties which have arisen in explaining the force of the Apostle's argument, in the address which is made in this epistle to both Jews and Gentiles, are to be imputed to the want of due attention to his words, and to the scope and design of his reasoning: for it has been generally supposed, that the Apostle does argue, in the first place, against the Gentiles to this effect: That by the LIGHT OF NATURE, or by their reason, exercised upon the material or visible objects which surround us, they were able to attain to the knowledge of the one true God, and of his attributes. So that they were without excuse in being guilty of idolatry, and in committing those foul disorders with which they are charged by the Apostle, in consequence of their departing from the knowledge of the true God.

The conclusions which appear to follow from this mistaken purpose of St. Paul's argument, have been drawn

drawn out in full length by the deistical undertakers, who have wrought upon it with unwearied industry, from this mistaken concession, and by the authority itself of divine revelation, to overturn the necessity of it : for they would infer from St. Paul's words, that there was a Religion and a Law of Nature, which might have been discovered to the Gentiles by right reasoning on the works of God ; from which, however, they departed by wrong reasoning, to follow their vain imaginations ; and upon this account it became expedient, through the divine wisdom and goodness, to re-publish and amend, or explain more fully, and enforce this Law of Nature.

So that the most condescending Deists are willing to allow some authority to the gospel, as a comment on the Law of Nature, drawn out as it were by a skilful hand, which may be of use to instruct the unlearned, inattentive, or unthinking persons of the world : but for those who are learned, inquisitive, and diligent masters in strict mathematical or right reasoning, they see with their own eyes, and can prove demonstratively the truth, extent, obligations, and sanctions of the Law of Nature ; in short, the whole sum of our duty to God and man.

And now since the reason of mankind is arrived at full maturity, by great discoveries in astronomical, mathematical, metaphysical, and moral sciences, they are much more able than the heathens were, by their speculations, to discern the Law of Nature founded on the reasons, relations, and fitnesses of things, and of course the learned and accomplished persons of these days, stand in little or no need of the gospel of Christ.

The answer already given to Doctor Clarke's endeavours in favour of the relations and fitnesses of things, may preclude any more of our words to that purpose ; but it now remains, in order to confute this deceitful and dangerous sophistry, that we should examine what pretensions the Deists have to the authority
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of St. Paul, which is boldly challenged to be on their side in this question.

By strict attention to the words of St. Paul, we shall find they are falsely alledged to support this assertion, That the being of one God, the Creator of all things, can be demonstrated *by the things that are made*, the objects of our senses ; for the accusation of St. Paul against the Gentile world, as he argues in this place, did concern only such persons in it, *who hold the truth in unrighteousness*, having received the truth, the great fundamental truth of religion, by tradition from the Jews, who were dispersed among them. And these Gentiles were justly to be condemned, *because that which may be known of God*, in consequence of his being acknowledged the Creator of the world, *is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them* ; for those attributes of his nature, which are the objects of our understandings, contemplating all things which surround us, *these the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

In St. Paul's discourse, *that which may be known of HIM, from the CREATION of the world, the invisible things of HIM, and the things that are MADE*, do evidently presuppose and imply the acknowledgment of HIM who CREATED the world, and MADE all these things which are about us ; and upon this supposition only his argument can proceed ; because if St. Paul meant otherwise, that the Being of God can be DEMONSTRATED from the works of CREATION, or the things that are MADE by HIM, he assumes in his terms what was to be proved ; the error we have observed of Dr. Clarke.

But by the acknowledgment of God being the CREATOR of all things, it follows, in due course of reasoning upon his works, that we may and ought to apprehend the attributes and perfections of his nature, as the objects of our understandings only, which are therefore called the Invisibles, or *the invisible things of him, which are clearly seen, being UNDERSTOOD by the things that*

that are MADE, even his eternal power and Godhead : so that they are without excuse, who hold the truth, and yet relapse into idolatry, by making visible representations, by idolatrous images of the INVISIBLE things of God ; because that when they knew God, the invisible object of their worship, they glorified him not as God, by addressing him only as the object of their understandings, and not of their bodily senses ; neither were thankful for his blessings or comforts given to them, but became vain in their imaginations, or reasonings upon natural things, and were thereby led astray to worship visible and idolatrous images.

The Apostle is so far from asserting, that the Gentiles were able, by the strength of their own reason, exercised upon the objects of our senses, to discover the true God, and from this knowledge acquired by themselves, to make out a law agreeable to his will for their direction, that he affirms clearly to the contrary purpose, that they who knew God, by instruction or tradition from his word, and so did hold the truth, were notwithstanding carried away from it, by their own deceitful opinions and reasonings, to corrupt his worship, and serve false Gods by idolatrous inventions.

Hence it is they were condemned and given up to vile affections, because they abused their understandings in arguing from their own phantastic conceits, instead of reasoning from the principle of true religion, derived to them by tradition from the word of God, which would have preserved them from idolatry.

So that this address of the Apostle is very distant from passing any commendation upon the powers of reason in the human mind, as if it were able from the visible world to discover the fundamental truth of religion, and, by due consequences from it, to controul the vain imaginations, and to subdue the roving appetites of wicked men, independently of any assistance from divine revelation, to which end the Apostle's authority has been often falsely quoted ; for his argument is opposed to this assertion, and relies on a contrary fact,

fact, that after the truth was given to them, they did hold it in unrighteousness, following their vain imaginations, in opposition to their understandings; which brings him to a comparison of the Jews with the Gentiles, and from that corrupt and sinful state in which they were both living, under the LAW of NATURE, to shew the unprofitableness of it, and thereby to establish the truth and expediency of God's mercy and grace, offered indiscriminately to Jews and Gentiles in the Gospel of Christ.

We may observe also, concerning the original expression, κατεχόντων, which is translated (*who hold*), that by the force of the preposition joined with the verb, it is properly rendered in Latin (*detinentium*), and signifies who hold, by, from, or under instruction; and so the corresponding term of catechising is used in our language, to signify the tradition or delivery of the truth by instruction.

To this same purpose of St. Paul's appeal to the works of God, we are called upon also to observe them in other parts of Holy Scripture, in numberless instances, in the book of Job, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets. Thus the Psalmist has told us, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work*: to which we may subjoin, by way of comment, what the son of Sirach has said very fully to this purpose.

Surely vain are all men by NATURE, who are ignorant of God, and could not, out of the good things that are seen, know him that is; neither by considering the works, did they acknowledge the work-master; but deemed either fire or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven, to be the GODS which govern the world; with whose beauty they being delighted, took them to be gods.

Let them know how much better the Lord of them is; for the first author of beauty hath created them. But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them how much mightier he is that made them.

And thus it is that *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.*

For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures, proportionably the maker of them is seen.

This is the DEMONSTRATION most lively and affecting, which the works of God conspire to set forth to the glory of his NAME; and the exhortations of the holy penmen are directed to awaken, excite, and encourage our attention to all the works of God for this purpose. Whereas, the application of mathematical terms to religious and spiritual subjects, has no other foundation to support it, but the invention of forging OF FRAMING IDEAS, according to the high conceits of deistical philosophers, the self-sufficient moralists of the latter times.

It is however to be remarked, as an instance of wonderful address and consistency, in propagating error from that same cause by which the first lye was introduced, that as this was effected by the attention of the human understanding being misled and betrayed by falshood, to conceive powers existing in things according to the appearance of their FORMS; and this vain imagination did set aside the authority of God's word; so it has followed, that the most deceitful and dangerous opposition to the truth of God, revealed for the recovery of mankind, has been propagated to betray their understandings from attending to his will, by means of their attention and attachment to mathematical reasoning, which is derived from the knowledge or science of the FORMS.

From the argument of St. Paul, which has been considered in its proper light, with due attention to the purpose for which it was introduced, we have a clear answer to what is now offered to us under the pretence of NATURAL RELIGION; since we find, by undeniable testimony, derived from experience of what the most enlightened persons of the Gentile world were able to perform by their reasonings upon the truth, that they fell very far short in making such profit by it, as what
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the modern philosophers have claimed by their own industry.

The poet and the philosopher in the heathen world were alike vain in their imaginations, and they did all of them fall under the censure of St. Paul, who altho' they had the truth by instruction, for acknowledging ONE GOD CREATOR of the world, of which the Apostle quotes an instance, *as, he tells the Athenians, certain also of your own poets have said, (for we are all HIS offspring)*; yet they did not pursue this truth by feeling or searching diligently after it, in due course of reasoning or argument, to find him, by discovering his attributes manifested in his works, and so to worship him as the invisible object of their understandings, and not of their bodily senses: and therefore the Apostle corrects the false reasoning of the Gentile world, beginning from that TRUTH which they had heard and received by tradition from the word of God through the nation of the Jews.

God that made the world, and all things that are therein, from hence he proceeds to argue, *seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with mens hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.* To which argument we all readily give our assent, and perceive that it follows very clearly from the truth laid down as the foundation of it, that *God created the heavens and the earth.* Yet although the connection appears evident to us, Pythagoras, whom we have good reason to be assured was instructed in that truth, did begin his moral and poetical precepts with advice to his scholars to worship the immortal gods, a plurality of them, according to the idolatries and superstitions enjoined by the LAWS of their country: also, that they should worship the HEROES, or the topical country gods; and likewise the INFERNAL DEMONS, by complying with their instituted rites and sacrifices. And the like accusation does extend to Socrates him-

self, who does, notwithstanding his better knowledge, relapse upon trial into the errors of idolatry.

From these and such like instances, which may be brought from the lives and doctrines of those persons who did hold confessedly the highest rank for wisdom in the heathen world, we have sure testimony of the great weakness and instability of the human understanding, to abide in the truth, after it is possessed of it; for vain imaginations and reasonings upon the powers of external objects, in relation to the supposed influence they might have upon human affairs, did prove such a temptation, even to the philosophers or contemplative men, as carried them away also from the truth, in compliance with the customs and prejudices they had received in favour of idolatry.

The conclusions we are warranted to draw from hence, may serve to abate our admiration of REASON, or of the RATIONAL powers or faculties of the human mind, even in those persons who have been most extolled in the use and exercise of them: for in regard to the subject of religion, which is of the greatest importance to our happiness, the philosophers can be admitted to have no authority at all in any thing they have said or wrote about it. None of them did argue according to the truth, when they knew it; and what they have said on moral subjects, however praise-worthy it was for promoting the temporal well-being of their fellow-citizens or countrymen, yet it is in no sort to be admitted by us for instruction in our duty towards God. Or, in other words, NATURAL RELIGION does afford no other foundation to rest our happiness upon, but what is fictitious, according to the distempered fancies and vain reasonings of our own corrupted and deceitful hearts.

It follows also from what we have observed, that the philosophers, or moralists of the present times, have very far exceeded the limits of NATURAL RELIGION, (if we may be allowed to use their own terms) both in respect to their arguments *a priori* and *a posteriori*; or,

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to speak more intelligibly than some of them are pleased to do, we affirm, in opposition to them, from experience of what the reason of mankind has afforded on that subject, that their systems of religious and moral precepts, which are founded on the belief of one God, Creator of heaven and earth, are not to be admitted as doctrines or dictates of NATURAL RELIGION.

And we proceed yet farther to convict them, *a priori*, from the principle of knowledge they have by their senses, that this principle does not afford a demonstration of that truth, but does naturally tend to betray the understanding from holding it. Or, in other terms, we assert, that God is not KNOWN by his WORKS, but by his WORD; and after he is KNOWN by his WORD, his WORKS bear witness to the attributes and perfections of his nature.

Again, the moralists have exceeded the limits of Natural Religion, by proposing the happiness of a future state to give a sanction and authority to their institutions. To this length they have been led by the necessity of their cause, since the gospel revelation has been received, which has *brought life and immortality to light*; and therefore the votaries of Natural Religion must lay in their claim to life and immortality also; or, otherways, at this time it might be hard for Natural Religion to keep its ground, independently of such promises as the Gospel makes to a Christian.

Upon this account, the rational philosophers have not only transcribed the laws of the two tables into their commentaries, or systems of moral compositions, but they have exceeded the bounds of the Moral Law of the Jewish dispensation, which had no promise of happiness in a future state annexed to it, because it is the LAW of NATURE, whose object being the happiness of this life, it was made perfect by TEMPORAL promises to that nation, under the sanction and authority of God, their law-giver: whereas among the heathen nations, the doctrine of a future state was by NECESSITY taken into their LAW of NATURE, to become

a political sanction to it, encouraging the observance of their moral precepts for preserving the order and well-being of society, by expectations of rewards and punishments, of future happiness and misery, proportioned to their merits, as good or bad men in their social intercourse in this life.

But the descriptions we meet with in heathen poets, which may be the best that the human imagination could afford of the happy or miserable estate of virtuous or wicked men in another life, do not now, in these enlightened days, obtain any credit among the defenders of the Law of Nature; and therefore they chuse to assume what is wanting in their systems, from the clear discovery made by the gospel: and as they have enriched their treatises of morality with treasures far exceeding what the philosophers of Greece and Rome had produced, by keeping more closely to the Moral Law of the two tables, with additions also from the refined morality of the gospel, often quoted, as corresponding with their notions of Natural Religion: so it has also come to pass, that they desire to propagate among their followers the belief of a future state of happiness, agreeable to that view we have of it in the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The method which has been taken to accomplish this purpose, is derived from the same principle of morality which they have set up for the regulation of all human actions, which is by the REASONS, OR RELATIONS, OR FITNESSES of things; from whence also they contend, that the actions of God must of NECESSITY be directed.

This conceit hath produced such sort of reasoning and discourse among the moralizing enthusiasts in demonstrative religion, as hath gone near to banish all reverence and respect even to the NAME of GOD, who is often talked of among them, as if they could set him at a distance, to look down upon and examine his actions, as they do the behaviour of one another; whence

whence they are bold to pronounce from those measures they have been pleased to fix upon, that he **CANNOT** or **MUST** not do any thing but what is **JUST** and **RIGHT**, and **FIT** and **GOOD**, that is, according to their notions of justice, righteousness, goodness, and fitness; or in other words (as they often speak of him by the term Deity, or the Deity) he must act, and judge, and determine, according to their practical and moral prescriptions.

To this same purpose it has been said, that God **MUST** have created all mankind for happiness; and that as our happiness does arise from acting according to the relations and fitnesses of things, **HE MUST** approve our behaviour on this condition, that we live according to them. And as this life does not afford a sufficient recompence for the benevolent actions of good men, **HE MUST** reward them in a future state of happiness proportioned to their virtues; and on a contrary supposition, the like reason **MUST** ensure the misery of the wicked.

The long laboured arguments of Dr. Clarke, relating to this article, in his evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, have no other foundation to rest upon, than such like presumptuous and peremptory assertions.

As we have already observed on his treatise, that our acting according to the relations and fitnesses of things, does imply nothing else, but our conformity in living by that principle of the knowledge of good and evil by our senses, from whence only we can judge of the relations and fitnesses of things, independently of divine revelation; it appears, to what dangerous consequences a self-confidence in our own reasonings will betray us, when we presume to measure the actions of God according to our own fancies, which are raised upon that corrupt principle introduced by disobedience to him; and that so soon as we lay aside the authority of God's word, for our guidance in religion, we **MUST** at the same time be guilty of blasphemy and infidelity.

From

From these observations, that have been made concerning the Law of Nature, or Natural Religion, we come to know the full value or meaning of those terms in common use, which have hitherto in such manner puzzled and perplexed the debates that have arisen concerning it, as to give occasion to endless and unprofitable discourse, between the defenders and opposers of that Law.

The subtil enemies of religion gain great advantages with such helps, in their controversy against truth, by having it mixed up, and intangled with *oppositions of science falsely so called*, to bear it down by force of technical terms, and phrases of uncertain, or variable, or of no signification; to amuse and baffle the understandings of honest men, who are not aware that they are contending with deceitful men, who do not mean to give any thing more by their specious arguments in favour of religion, but only such *good words and fair speeches*, as then can most conveniently abuse, by adding to them forgeries and falsehoods of their own framing and inventions.

But besides the libertine, deistical, or atheistical tribe, who have undertaken to combat with the word of God openly, great numbers have unwarily embraced some of their false doctrines and positions, who were earnestly and seriously disposed to abide in the truth; but, by their mistaken zeal to support it with endeavours to prove more than what was due to their cause, have thereby given great advantage to their adversaries; who are well taught to lay hold upon any falsehood which is blended with the truth, as their own proper engine, to supplant and overturn it.

Upon this account, the best service we are capable of doing for true religion, is, to separate and distinguish it from human inventions; which the Apostle has expressed by the business of *a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*, or, as the original term properly signifies, rightly cutting it off from all spurious and corrupt mixtures, which have been craftily introduced and offered with it.

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But although it be our duty to contend earnestly for our faith, and to keep it pure from the insidious attempts of our adversaries; we are by no means licensed, as the servants of God, to pass our judgment of condemnation upon others of our brethren, who are, or have been engaged in the support of errors, or of heretical doctrines or opinions; for our controversy with them extends no farther, than to reprove their words by the Word of God: as to their own particular state, we know it not; nor can we pretend to pronounce upon it, without being guilty of rashness and presumption: because, that circumstance which will either acquit or condemn them in the judgment of God, is utterly unknown to us, who cannot discern with what evidence of the truth their minds were touched, or what resistance against their better knowledge and conviction they have made in rejecting and departing from it. So that although on proper occasions of our defence, we are warranted to pronounce that the arguments of our adversaries are false, heretical or blasphemous, it does not from hence follow, that we should take upon us to give sentence upon them, as if in respect to their final state, they were now become subject to our judgment: to their own master they stand or fall; and the warning given by the word of God, declaring, *wo unto that man by whom the offence cometh*, is to make us watchful over ourselves, to beware of falling under that dreadful punishment which will be their portion, who do wilfully oppose or offend against truth, to deceive and betray others also from the love and pursuit of it.

We have already observed, that a principal cause of that perplexity, which has arisen in all arguments relating to Natural Religion, was owing to terms of doubtful signification, which are confidently obtruded by the defenders of it, to convey false notions as unquestionable truths; such as ought to be taken like the axioms of science on the first proposal of them; and that of

course no person should be accounted rational, who would presume to doubt or hesitate about them.

But as we may now be delivered from that blind reverence to Natural Religion, which has very long possessed the minds of men, who were not fully aware of the tendency of it; we are enabled also, by understanding the Law or Religion of Nature, to unfold the terms covering those false notions, that have been brought to support it.

To begin with the first of them, NATURAL RELIGION: in these terms there is falsehood laid down as the foundation of false reasoning upon them.

The word RELIGION, derived from the Latin *Religo*, signifies a binding over again; and in the sacred sense to which it is applied, imports a new obligation, tying or enforcing us to the observance of our duty to God; which implies a supposition, that we had fallen off from a former obligation, which was loosened or found insufficient for that purpose; accordingly the discoveries of divine truth and mercy conveyed to us in the terms of revealed Religion in the gospel of Christ, do all conspire to unite and bind us strictly in our duty to God, upon supposition of our acknowledgment that we had fallen from him, both in the original corruption of our nature, and by actual transgressions of our own commission in consequence of it, which are clearly laid before us by the word of God.

These truths are denied in the terms of NATURAL RELIGION; for they import, that we may be naturally sufficient for the discharge of our duty to God, and thereby acquire a NATURAL right to inherit his favour, without including any supposition of our having fallen from him by our corrupted NATURE; so that RELIGION, as joined to the term NATURAL, becomes a lye in the terms; for to what purpose should we be bound over again, if we had not fallen, but were naturally sufficient and disposed to our duty?

But what is found to be a lye in terms, for the pretended purpose of Natural Religion, as binding or

uniting us in obedience to God, we may clearly discover to be a certain truth for the contrary or real purpose of it, as tending to alienate and separate us in virtue of our own self-sufficiency, from attending unto the Word or Will of God; that is, NATURAL RELIGION stands in opposition to REVEALED RELIGION, as the former does aim, by lyes imposed upon our understandings in consequence of our fall and departure from God, to bind us over again to our NATURAL corruption and depravity, by directing our attention to the objects and pleasures of our senses, in opposition to the revealed Will and commands of God, and thereby prompting us to walk according to the first advice suggested by the old deceiver.

Another term of very great importance to the cause of Natural Religion, is what all men put in their claim to have as their undoubted birth-right, and that is, LIBERTY; a privilege generally supposed to be well understood, and to which every one of us by NATURE is equally intitled.

From hence it comes to pass, that some other terms are brought into discourse and argument, as if they were clearly known, and their meaning agreed upon among all rational enquirers: thus it is said, that we are all endued with FREE WILL, and that MAN is a FREE AGENT.

As liberty is allowed to be essential to our happiness, and to be endued with FREE WILL is accounted the distinguishing excellence and property of human nature, we may be enabled to ascertain the due signification of that word in religious controversies.

Liberty, in a religious sense of the word, does presuppose a capacity of receiving and holding that principle on which true Religion is built; that is, the knowledge of one God the Creator of heaven and earth; and in consequence of this knowledge, our liberty does consist in a power of directing our actions according to his Will in the pursuit of our happiness.

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By this explanation of that term, we may perceive the falshood of that notion of liberty, by which it is supposed to consist in a power of acting either according to the truth, or against the truth; forasmuch as in the latter case we act in opposition or contradiction to our happiness, we do therefore cease to be free, and forfeit our liberty by departing from truth; that is, by rebelling against God we act for our own misery, and of course become SUBJECT to the working of those causes which do NECESSARILY produce our death.

From hence we see how precariously these terms are to be understood, that MAN is a FREE AGENT; for universally taken they are false, since no man is a Free Agent in the true and proper meaning of the words, but he who is acting in pursuit of his happiness according to the Will of God. In the other acceptation of the word Liberty, as implying a power of doing or forbearing any act merely relating to this present life, brutes may be Free Agents, since it is evident to us, that they have a liberty of choice in the actions they are capable of, in following the purposes of animal life.

Hence we see, that the libertine, or sensualist, or worldly projector, is deceived in his NOTION of Liberty, for he is not FREE in any other meaning of the word, than as a captive may be, who is at liberty to walk either to the one side, or to the other side, of his room or dungeon to which he is confined.

When we act according to our own Wills, by that knowledge we have of the pleasures and pains of sense, this mistaken freedom lies in a very narrow compass of choice, among the perishing comforts of this life, which are NECESSARILY circumscribed and limited in our enjoyment of them by a very short time, which of course will introduce our misery and death; whereas, if we renounce our OWN WILLS by making them to correspond with the Will of God, our Liberty cannot be circumscribed or limited; there is NO NECESSITY to put a period to it; our happiness will continue for ever with

with our freedom, when we are instructed and engaged to pursue it, according to his Will and Word who is the fountain of happiness and of truth.

But we cannot be more clearly taught to conceive rightly of our Liberty, than from the declaration made by our Lord himself to the Jews: *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the TRUTH shall make you FREE. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made FREE?*

Much the same answer which the mistaken advocates for Liberty would now make, who are not aware of that spiritual bondage they lie under, by evil passions of pride, or envy, or lust, or ambition, because they do not feel their fetters upon their hands or their feet, or see them with their eyes; but *Jesus answered them, Verily, Verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin; and the servant (of sin) abideth not in the house for ever; he has but a short time to do according to his own WILL in his Master's house, who will soon call him to account for his evil works, and then send him out of it for ever; but the son abideth for ever as the master of the house: if the son therefore shall make you FREE in his house, ye shall be FREE INDEED.*

From these observations which follow easily by due attention given to the word of God, we may avoid those perplexities of endless and unprofitable argument, which are craftily brought in by the false advocates for Liberty, who mean to overturn the true and proper account of it, by FRAMING such conceits as serve best to baffle and amuse the understandings of well-disposed men: true christian Liberty, either in the church or state, being generally most in danger from the hands of such persons who are apt to talk and dispute much in the specious defence of it.

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We may explode, together with false notions of Liberty, that undue conceit of it, by which the origin of EVIL has been accounted for, which has been said to have arisen from the ABUSE of our LIBERTY. If we had been told that evil came in by the loss of our Liberty, we might not scruple to assent unto it; but to be told that evil came in by the abuse of our Liberty, may lead us into the error of supposing, that our Liberty continued, though it had been abused, and that we might still be FREE merely by our own care, although our Liberty was forfeited and lost by the original transgression.

There is no doubt, such sort of NOTIONS are much to their purpose, who plead the cause of Natural Religion; and if it were not opposed to divine revelation, there would be no need at all of dissertations about the origin of evil; for we are clearly told by divine authority, how sin and death came in among us through apostacy and rebellion against God; if we are curious indeed to seek farther, how evil came into his nature, who was and is our tempter to it, we shall be guilty of presumption, by searching into secret things which are not revealed, and may be far above our understandings to conceive.

The true account which declares in what our Liberty does consist, will make us free from those vain and perplexing fears, which are propagated by false notions of PREDESTINATION, and ELECTION, and REPROBATION; by which many souls have been intangled, through the artifice of their enemy, to resign their Liberty into his hands, and to continue WILFULLY in subjection to his guidance and government.

As our Liberty and our Happiness do arise from acting according to the Will of God, it implies a blasphemous contradiction to suppose, that he hath fore-ordained or predestinated that any person should be eternally miserable; that is, it implies that it should be the Will of God, that such a person should act against the Will of God; accordingly the terms predestinate

tinatE or PREDESTINATED, are only used in scripture to signify the ELECTION made by God of such persons whom he called to enjoy the benefits of his grace and mercy, by his fore-knowledge of their disposition or readiness to forsake their own WILLS, in obedience to his divine Will when revealed to them: and so the terms REPROBATE and REPROBATES, as they are found in scripture, denote the obstinacy or perverseness of such persons, who reject the condition of their LIBERTY which is offered to them by the word of God, as they chuse to be FREE in imagination, by acting according to their own WILLS, which lead them into the slavery of sin and Satan, in opposition to the service of God, which is perfect freedom.

The terms of predestination and election, being set in opposition to reprobation, have occasioned dangerous and deceitful imaginations and false reasonings upon them, as if it were not the Will of God, that all men should obey the truth when proposed to them, and that it arose from his partial dealings, that some men should be saved, and others perish: whereas, according to the truth revealed, the terms of ELECT and REPROBATE are declarative of the dispositions of men, the elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, being ready when called to obey the Will of God; but the reprobates when called are hardened or blinded by their own perverseness to stand out in opposition to it, as chusing to act independently, or after their own WILLS, in search for their happiness, in disobedience to the Will of God; for which reason, according to God's equitable and impartial dealing, *Many be called, but few chosen*: many are called, by having the knowledge of his Name and of his Will declared to them, but few are chosen as rightly disposed to receive the benefits of his grace, and thereby to become chosen vessels or instruments of conveying his mercy to the rest of mankind.

The FOREKNOWLEDGE of God, so far as we are instructed by his word to conceive of it, does import

his clear and distinct vision of all our actions, in the respective causes or motives of them; whether they proceed from that principle of our OWN KNOWLEDGE which will lead us according to our own WILLS to walk by sight, or whether they are directed by the principle of FAITH in him, by which we are led to obey his WILL revealed to us, when we walk by FAITH; that is, the actions of mankind, which are only known to us by their effects, are known unto God by the causes which produce them; and the whole compass of action which can be formed or produced on the principle of our own knowledge introduced by disobedience to him, is as clearly known to his all-seeing eye, as that course or compass of action which is ordered by, or is according to, his Will made known to us by his Word.

In the former case, when we act upon the principle leading us according to our own Wills, by which we lay a false claim to our Liberty, it implies a contradiction, that the foreknowledge of God should have any influence to keep us to that principle in disobedience to him; for that supposes, as we have already observed, that it would be his Will we should act against his Will: and, in the latter case, when our actions do proceed upon the principle of faith in him, it implies a contradiction also, that his foreknowledge should limit our Liberty; which is the same as supposing, that it might be the Will of God, that we should not continue to live according to the Will of God: so that the only advantage the enemy of our souls may obtain against us in this matter is, by setting us on such enquiries as do exceed the reach of our understandings, when we attempt presumptuously to explain the FOREKNOWLEDGE of God, or how it is that he understands and knoweth all things in their principles and causes; to which attempt such persons may be easily invited, who have already determined, by the all-sufficiency of their own reason, how it is that God must act according to the relations and fitnesses of things.

Among all the terms of uncertain and variable significations which have been introduced for the support of Natural Religion, there is none more useful in its defence, than REASON, or RIGHT REASON, taken at large without any definition to ascertain its meaning; for, as we have already observed, that every man by birth-right has his claim to REASON, he is supposed, or at least does suppose for himself that he is, capable of judging what is reasonable or fitting for him to do according to the various purposes or occurrences of his life; therefore he is APT to agree, or to coincide with those designs which he is told are RATIONAL or REASONABLE, especially when they conspire with the main ends of his actions in his present state.

But although every man is allowed to have REASON, or more properly a power of reasoning conferred upon him, so as to distinguish him eminently above the animals of the brute creation, yet this power is possessed in very different degrees of perfection, as some men are very far exalted above others, in the use or application of their rational or reasoning power.

This difference is so very apparent and undeniable, that by it a foundation is laid for AUTHORITY to be exercised by some men over others, in prescribing rules of action and behaviour, for the good order, and government, and welfare of mankind.

To find out and to ascertain the limits of this authority, is of much consequence, in order to preclude all unjust pretensions to it, and thereby to abridge those argumentative contests, which have long disturbed and embroiled the peace and good agreement of men.

However men may differ from one another in regard to the strength or soundness of the faculty or power of reasoning, they do all agree in the same method or art of using it, that is, as we have before remarked, they advance by a gradual process from some fixed or settled axioms or principles, to obtain remote and distant conclusions. The excellency, and brightness, and vigour of the intellectual acts in this progress, do appear

in the accurate discovery and connexion of those intermediate steps which lead from the principle to the conclusions we mean to establish.

Hence it follows, that in the due exercise of our reason these two conditions are required,

1st. That the principle on which our reasoning is built be true.

2dly, That we proceed to our conclusions by such steps as have a certain connexion with the principle on which they are raised.

If either of these conditions are neglected, in any address made to us for influencing our behaviour in life, we are in danger of being misled by FALSE AUTHORITY, and by acting according to it we shall suffer damage in proportion to the greatness or importance of the ERROR. So that before we assent to any proposition which is made for our direction, it does much concern us to give due attention to examine the principle from whence it does arise, and whether it is rightly obtained or derived from it.

In regard to mathematical reasoning, the axioms or principles on which it proceeds being self-evident, or truths known by our sense of sight or intuition, we cannot be deceived in them; but as the labour is great in discovering and connecting intermediate steps, which are necessary to exhibit the remote properties of complex forms and figures; in this kind of knowledge there is room for AUTHORITY to inform us of such truths in that science as we might not be able, by our own application or sagacity, to discover. But in this case we see upon what foundation the authority of a mathematical argument is raised, since it always rests upon this supposition, that it may be proved to be true from the self-evident axioms or principles of that science, and not on the supposition of the superior excellency or perfection of his reason, who has been able to produce it, although, it may be, very few other men would have been equal to accomplish or investigate the proof or demonstration of it.

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By this instance we may discern how a false authority may be claimed and exercised; for he who conceives highly of his own REASON, will be apt to dictate; and when we submit to such dictates out of respect to the REASON OR ABILITIES OF REASONING which we conceive another man is possessed of, we are in danger of being misled by FALSE AUTHORITY, that is, to depend upon his WORD, not considering the principle from whence he has argued, or how he has drawn his conclusions from it.

As to speculative opinions or assertions, which do not affect our religious or moral behaviour, it is not of great consequence to be much on our guard against false authority, since in these matters it is supposed our happiness is not concerned, whether the opinions we submit to are true or false; for example, it is a case of indifference to our welfare, whether we believe in the truth of the system of planetary motions, as taught by the Newtonian or by the Cartesian philosophers; however, it may be, in such like questions, men are more upon their guard against error by false authority, than in contests where their real interest is concerned; for excellency and superiority in the art of reasoning is eagerly disputed, when there is no motive of private pleasure or profit in view to induce a submission to usurped authority.

But although we may readily yield our assent to human authority in matters purely speculative, yet when it is exercised in dictating rules of moral and religious conduct, it is always liable to suspicion, because men are naturally forward to assume to themselves a superiority in reasoning, and also they may be tempted to mislead other men into false opinions, favouring false interests, which they themselves are pursuing, and so they become *blind leaders of the blind*; wherefore in such matters the authority or word of man is always precarious, and is not to be depended upon for TRUTH, without examining and referring to the PRINCIPLE on which it is raised, and from whence it proceeds.

There are but TWO PRINCIPLES from whence all reasoning in regard to our religious and moral conduct does proceed; the one derived to us by our corrupted NATURE, recommending the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by our senses as a PRINCIPLE of life, to seek for our happiness in this world among the comforts and pleasures of it; but as this PRINCIPLE, which was introduced by disobedience unto God, tendeth unto DEATH, all arguments derived from it are FALSE, when they are offered as rules of LIFE arising from a religious consideration of our duty to God; and therefore all HUMAN AUTHORITY in RELIGION is false or USURPED AUTHORITY, because it does solely rest on that principle when it is exercised independently of the WORD of God, which is the other and the ONLY TRUE PRINCIPLE of LIFE.

Hence it is that the AUTHORITY we deny to the word of man is ABSOLUTELY due to the word of GOD, that is, his AUTHORITY is perfect, because his WORD is TRUTH. So that in all true reasoning for our direction in our moral and religious behaviour, the principle on which it rests is the word of GOD. And when our reasoning is not deduced from this principle, no DUTY or NO OBLIGATION can arise from it, but what results from a false or USURPED AUTHORITY; that is, all arguments tending to OBLIGATION, which rest finally upon the word of man, or upon the word of ANY CREATURE, as the PRINCIPLE of their evidence or support, are false, as by supposition they are not upheld by the word of GOD, that is, by TRUTH.

As for TEMPORAL AUTHORITY, which prescribes the rules of our actions in civil life, so far as it is duly exercised, it coincides with divine authority, since God has taught us by his wisdom, when he spake of it, *By me kings reign, and princes decree justice: by me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.* Upon which account it is, that the Apostle has exhorted, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,* in that temporal state or community in which he is placed; *for there is no power*

power but of God, who is the fountain of all AUTHORITY and power; *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation*; which words contain a double lesson of instruction, first to the governors, *for there is no power but of God*: so that if they act in their government contrary to the WORD and AUTHORITY of God, they act in opposition to his power; that is, to the destruction of their own delegated power from him. And to the governed, who are warned against resisting the power in the hands of the magistrate, since they are by God's word obliged to consider their governors as constituted by him; *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God*. The turbulent and seditious or rebellious offender is not only guilty of violating the king's authority or commission, for which he is liable to temporal punishment; but he that resisteth the lawful authority placed over him, he resisteth the ordinance and appointment of God for the order and peace of the world; and *they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation*, for acting in disobedience to the Will or Word of God.

But in such cases where the magistrate commands what God has forbidden, we have also the rule from his word, *We ought to obey God rather than men*, howsoever we may be exposed to temporal pains or inconveniencies by so doing.

As human authority, duly placed and exercised under the hands of a lawful magistrate, does not interfere to mislead or pervert us in the observance of moral or religious duties, we need not make any more particular remarks than we have done already, to shew, that magisterial or parental AUTHORITY rests or depends upon the WORD of God.

But as the hope and assurance of our happiness do depend on a course of life or action, which is not cognizable or subject to the animadversions of temporal rulers, in that most important view of it which extends to all futurity, we must especially beware of resting our

faith on false or usurped authority ; and therefore we must not abide in the word of man, or of any other creature, but in the Word of God only, which is the Word of Truth. So that in all reasonings which are offered as concerning our duty to him, our attention is necessary to examine the principle on which they proceed, and whether they are duly obtained from it.

In this examination we may discover falshood, either in the invention of false principles, or in false consequences drawn from the true principle.

First, it does concern us to be on our guard against the invention of false principles ; for by this means error is most easily propagated, when we look beyond, or pass by the true PRINCIPLE, to admit a false principle in its place. Of this invention we have an instance in the first false argument which was made to deceive mankind ; for the tempter found admission for his word, by prevailing to have his reasoning heard, in opposition to God's word, which artifice led our first parents to rest the hope of their happiness on a LYE, which was the principle afforded by the evil spirit to divert their attention from the TRUTH. And by that infirmity, which was contracted in consequence of attending to his false AUTHORITY, in reasoning beyond the word of God, we are still in danger of being guilty of like presumption, in seeking for REASONS of RELIGION farther than his word. Therefore, when we believe, that what is enjoined as our duty, is required by divine authority, we are not to search for any other principle to enforce obedience to it ; that is, NO AUTHORITY is to be admitted in competition with, much less in opposition to the WORD of God.

From hence we may discern clearly the opposition between the TWO PRINCIPLES, the one of FAITH, the other of SIGHT, and our obligation to walk by FAITH in God's word, and not by SIGHT, according to our own reasonings from the corrupt principle of our own KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL. And hereby also we learn the true meaning of the term FAITH, appropriated,

ated, according to its import in the holy writings, to signify the full assent of our understandings, enlightened by the WORD of GOD, determining our WILLS to the obedience of his holy WILL, as he has been pleased to reveal it to us.

In this light our FAITH is considered in holy scripture, as the principle of all such actions as become acceptable in the sight of God ; and the language of all the sacred writers discoursing upon it is to the same effect, though differently expressed ; for when St. Paul says, *that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law*, he establishes Faith as the principle of good works, thereby setting aside the legal sanction or principle, derived from pleasure or pain, in the knowledge of good and evil by our senses ; so that God has found out a way to justify a man, *without the deeds of the law*, which no man, in his natural corrupted state, was able to fulfil ; and *therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight* ; which agrees perfectly with what St James says, though seemingly opposed to it, *how that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only* ; which implies, that our justification does depend on our Faith, being a principle of life or action, to give birth to good works bearing witness of it. Whereas, if our faith is only the bare assent of our understandings, convinced of divine truth, this persuasion the devils have, and tremble at it ; but the faith of a just man will shew itself in his works : and if our faith does not appear in our works, we have not that faith which is necessary to salvation ; or, as the Apostle has expressed it, *Even so Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*, when our wills are not determined by our understandings, enlightened by the word of God.

The great task of the adversary to true religion, is to evade and oppose, and to defeat the influence of divine AUTHORITY upon the minds or understandings of men ; that is, to supplant or pervert their FAITH, by gaining their attention to some other purpose or principle of action, different from the WORD of GOD,

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This task has been attempted and executed in the earlier days of divine revelation, through all the stratagems and insinuations of deceit, variously addressed to the appetites, and passions, and prejudices of mankind; from whence have arisen those numberless fashions and forms of idolatrous worship, which have prevailed by the industry of the devil, to enslave the souls of men under rigorous servitude, to give worship and adoration to him, as represented and exhibited by his handicraft machinery and impostures, in the subtil forgeries and inventions of fantastical divinities for the heathen world.

By this cunning artifice of idolatrous and mechanical worship, addressed to the fancies and passions of mankind, the Jewish nation also, who were peculiarly favoured with divine revelation, became ensnared, to take example from their idolatrous neighbours, and did forsake the true God, and that worship of him which he had required.

But after the oracles of the evil spirit were silenced, by the word of God enlightening the understandings of men, wherever it was published by our Lord and his Apostles, the founders of the Christian church; the opposition to the FAITH has been managed by other arts, of more subtil address and insinuation, setting up idols of a spiritual nature, in the room of those gross, material, and palpable LIES, which were adored among the heathen nations of the world.

For this purpose the industry of our spiritual adversary has been employed, to allure men, by their passions, to imitate him in those spiritual vices, by which they have been engaged to contradict and counteract the word of God, through pride and self-confidence in their own reasonings, setting up to be leaders in new opinions, dictated to oppose the doctrine of Christ. From hence the antient and modern HERETICS have arisen, who, by false AUTHORITY, in reasoning beyond the word of God, have led away their deluded followers, taking up their names and opinions, in opposition

to the divine authority of God's word, as declared by our Lord and his Apostles.

To this end the Arian and Socinian heresies were invented, to set aside the DIVINITY of Christ; that is, to prove that God did not speak IN and BY him, and thereby to open a way for human AUTHORITY to take place against all such doctrines of the NEW TESTAMENT, as those heretical teachers, or others of their kindred, are not pleased to admit, which is the ultimate design of all heretical impostures.

Here we may note the origin of their error in the old Manichean Heretics, who, by false arguments derived from the EVIL PRINCIPLE of action, brought in by disobedience to God, framed a supposition of an ORIGINAL EVIL PRINCIPLE of existence, in opposition with him.

According to that method which our Lord himself did observe in his temptations, when he confuted Satan, the great adversary of Truth, it is our duty to oppose him and his instruments by the WORD of GOD ONLY, *rightly dividing the word of Truth* from all corrupt mixtures, which its enemies would recommend to us along with it; *For all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* So that if we search the scriptures with due attention, in all cases of our controversy with the adversaries of our religion, we shall find them *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction*, without having recourse to human authority, or to demonstrative mathematical arguments, the admired instruments of our own self-sufficiency.

The main artifice of all heretical instructors, is to divert our attention from the clear AUTHORITY of God's word, unto the authority of such crafty deductions from it, as privily bring in that error they mean to establish, in opposition to the Truth, thereby gaining an admission for their own word, in opposition to
God's

God's word ; therefore the way to defeat their industry, will be to hold out against them the pure, unmixed, and uncorrupted Word of Truth.

Thus, for example, in the controversy with Arians, who deny, according to their reasoning from the scriptures, that our Lord Jesus Christ is God ; we have to oppose them the words of Christ, who said, *Before Abraham was I AM* : and again, *I and my FATHER are ONE*. To which let us add the terms of his commission given to his Apostles, for the conversion of all nations to the FAITH, *baptizing them in the NAME of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST*. To which the words of St. Paul bear a clear testimony also, when speaking of the great privileges of his brethren or kinsmen according to the flesh, he said, *Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever*.

In offering these and such other texts of holy scripture, as we do believe conclude most expressly for it, our duty, as ministers of God, in this controversy with Arians is at an end ; for although we may be assured the adversary will continue to gainsay the word of God, yet he fails in his purpose, when he cannot withdraw us by his arguments from it ; that is, when we decline all his attempts, to try the merits of the cause by our own reasonings, according to our knowledge of outward and sensible things.

If men do withstand the word of God wilfully, it is not our duty to fret upon that account, and in anger or blind zeal rush on with our own hands and weapons to pull them down ; for God will, in due time, vindicate his own authority against all proud contemners or mockers of it ; and we conspire to encourage and to abet an opposition to, or deviation from truth, when we seek for other arguments from our own experience, and are not concluded by such only as we have by Faith, that is, by the Word of God.

But although the decision of our controversy with these and all other Heretics, may be allowed to rest upon

upon one or more texts of scripture, affirming in clear terms what they deny ; yet we are not precluded from bringing forth such arguments as may be drawn from all other parts of the holy writings, which conspire in the acknowledgment and expression of the truth, to comfort, confirm, and strengthen those persons who are already sound in the faith, to withstand the crafty attempts and assaults of their enemies ; and this task many excellent and learned writers of the Christian church have successfully discharged in their controversies with the Arians and other Heretics.

By holding the AUTHORITY of God's Word as the only source of RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION, that distinction between MORAL and POSITIVE duties is destroyed, which has been invented for the support of the Law of Nature ; by which the teachers of it have been bold to give the preference to moral or social duties, as if all positive commands of God (as they are pleased to call them) were designed for the support and establishment of his moral precepts, that is, such as tend to the mutual ease or comfort and happiness of ourselves and our brethren in this present state ; and therefore, by keeping this design always in view, we may be taught easily to dispense with ourselves in observance of the positive commands or duties.

But the foundation of this false reasoning is taken away, when we confess to the Truth, in deriving all religious obligation from the Word of God, and so come to understand, that whatever benefits of social kindness we confer upon one another, the merit of them, as religious duties, does not arise from the worth or value of such perishing comforts in the hands of our brethren ; but they become only acceptable in the sight of God, as evidences of our Faith in his Word : for when we are meek, and humble, and patient, and charitable, following the example and instructions of our blessed Lord, in doing good to our brethren, by teaching them to be faithful by our behaviour among them, we do then unite the character of a good Christian

tian with that of a good citizen, or a lover of our country, and shall always act the part of a sure friend, with brotherly kindness, to support, and relieve, and comfort every one in distress, according to our power and opportunity, in passing thro' the transitory scenes of this uncertain world.

Although the Law of Nature is annulled, and set aside by the Christian dispensation, as being now no longer in force to hold us in subjection under the rigorous conditions or sanctions of it; yet the intention of the Law, for the performance of moral or social duties, is ensured by the Gospel, which has discovered the true principle of life, to reform and amend the spirits of men, and to endue them with those spiritual virtues and graces, which recommend them to the favour of God, and will dispose them according to his will, to live *soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*. Therefore the Apostle denies, with just abhorrence of such imputation, that the preachers of the gospel do at all design to exclude the practice of moral duties, which he has expressed in this question, *Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the Law*. So far are we from discouraging good works, or the observance of moral duties, which are required and commanded by the law, that the preachers of the gospel convey from it those instructions of life, which can alone enable and establish us in the performance of our whole duty both to God and man.

According to the pure and perfect morality of the gospel, all the duties of society, or friendship, or brotherly kindness, are considered as fruits of that inward purity and perfection of the heart, which by the grace of God is communicated to us; and the precepts of our Lord and his Apostles, concerning our behaviour to one another, are always given in consequence of our embracing those principles of true religion, which are opened to us in the gospel. From whence we learn,
that

that we are not *sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.*

All the disciples of Christ have this lesson before them, that they must not conceive they have naturally any power or capacity to do good works, such as will recommend them to the favour of God, by their moral or social intercourse with one another; for whatever benefits of this sort we are capable of performing, are of no account in a Christian life, unless they are accompanied by faith and charity, directing us to have the first and chief regard in all dealings with our brethren to their spiritual welfare and improvement: to which purpose the Apostle has unfolded the various effects of true christian charity, that spiritual grace, the gift of God, which is the medicine afforded by him to heal up the inward and spiritual maladies of our souls; so that if our attention is not principally concerned, in our intercourse with our brethren, to mitigate and heal up the distempers of their minds by suitable address and application to their circumstances, which we are taught to acquire by the light of God's word, all other bounties or acts of benevolence which we may bestow, as *benefactors* to their outward conditions of distress in this world, such sort of good works, howsoever regarded by men who give, or by those who receive, are of no account as christian virtues in the sight of God. This truth St. Paul has expressed in the strongest terms, *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* Many such instances of suffering and self-denial have been given in the world, proceeding from vain-glory, and from false and enthusiastic conceits of religious obligation; but such sort of mortifications are hateful in the sight of God, by whom actions are weighed and estimated according to the principle from whence they proceed. If our faith and charity proceed from hearing and believing in his holy word, our services will be accepted according to the truth of his promises, and not according

ing to the gaudy colourings which our pride or passions put on what we do for one another.

But to return to that distinction between MORAL and POSITIVE duties, which is industriously supported and propagated by the self-sufficient reasoners upon Natural Religion; we do not find that these casuists have made out any catalogue or summary of those positive duties, which they would have us to consider as the dictates of mere arbitrary will or command, and as such to have respect unto them only in a subordinate view of their expediency and convenience, or obligation; but although they do not chuse to speak out quite plain in such matters, we may be well enough able to discover their purposes; for we have sure tokens, by observation of their moral conduct, and argumentative addresses, to be satisfied what sort of commands those are which they would make only of precarious obligation; such, no doubt, as do not perfectly coincide with their manly or rational or Natural Religion; in short, all those commands which our REASON does not thoroughly understand and approve as of immediate use or benefit to ourselves or others.

By this mark of distinction we may be naturally led up to reflect upon what may be called the first POSITIVE command given to our first parents; and, according to the artifice of the first OLD REASONER upon it, against the AUTHORITY of God's word, we may be taught either to disbelieve the injunction, or to abet the transgression.

By the like steps we may be led on to make our religion so very easy and convenient to the indulgence of all, or of any one of our corrupted appetites, passions, and prejudices, that the doctrines of abstinence and self-denial, and all other instructions given in the Gospel, to disunite or separate our love from this world, may be considered as OBLIGATORY at particular times, or only to some particular persons, or at some certain seasons, when we can best comply with their observance; but that for the general course of our living,

living, we may be free for enjoyment of all the pleasures of the world, pursuing our own inclinations, without any restraint in gratification of appetite; to eat and to drink, and to rise up to play, according to our own fantastical humours, in contempt of every serious and sober reflection, that would engage our attention to the real interest and concern of our lives.

The same address in reasoning and distinguishing between God's commands, may be extended more especially to set aside the observance of the Lord's Day, or, at the least, to make such persons indifferent about the public and religious worship of God, who may be easily persuaded, that their time on that day may be more usefully employed to themselves and others, in acting, consulting, and contriving for the success of their worldly affairs; or, if they should think fit to rest from the toils of such business on that day, they may contrive to wear it out in amusements for their health, or in journies, or in feasting, or in such diversions of bodily exercise, as best agree with their taste or conditions in life. And too often it has been seen and heard of among persons of exalted condition in the world, that this day, by divine authority set apart to give honour to God, has, by authority of their eminent and ensnaring examples, been made an appointed season for gaming, to corrupt and debauch the minds of all persons about them, and to communicate those evil passions of covetousness, and envy, and anger, which rule the spirits of gamesters, who are the bold adventurers of impiety and irreligion.

The Christian sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the like argument and distinction, are to be looked upon as POSITIVE duties. In regard to Baptism, the adversaries of religion do not usually employ their industry to set aside its obligation in the form of administration, because it serves their purpose much more effectually, to have it renounced by the wicked lives and discourses of their followers,

apostatizing or denying the Lord, who bought them, in whose name they have been baptized.

But the eucharistical sacrament of the Lord's Supper is much more obnoxious to the endeavours of false brethren, to pervert it from the plain purpose and design of its institution ; which, as it appears from the words of our blessed Master, who desired his disciples to do this act of religious obligation in remembrance of him, does imply, that all his servants, in commemorating his death and passion in the use of this solemn rite, should approach his table with a lively faith in the merits of his death, thereby confessing and repenting of their sins for which he died, and at the same time resolving, in remembrance of him, to follow the example of his holy life, under whatever discouragements of worldly sufferings they may be exposed to on that account, to persevere even unto death, with the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, partaking of his body and blood.

Therefore, to obviate such a memory of him, and to defeat such resolutions, which are clearly the purpose of that sacred institution, the adversaries of his religion have variously attempted to abuse, and pervert, and perplex the meaning of this duty ; either to remove all sacred regard of it, which might be profitable to the ends of a holy life, according to the arts of the moralizing Deist, or to fix the attention in such manner upon the FORM of that act, derived from the letter of its institution, as not only to destroy the meaning, but to convert it into a superstitious and blasphemous instrument of idolatrous worship, according to the subtil artifice of the Romish IMPOSTURE.

In answer to the false distinction of moral and positive duties, it is easy to retort upon the Moralists, by affirming, that moral or social duties are the POSITIVE duties, as they are all comprehended in the laws of the second table, which surely they will allow are positively enjoined and commanded ; and therefore, as this mark, according to the purpose of their distinction, should

denote a secondary or precarious obligation, it follows, that moral duties are of a secondary or precarious obligation, as being good only for the present time, or the present world, or the present wants and infirmities of mankind; and therefore when they speak of the UN-ALTERABLE obligations of natural religion, to enforce the observance of moral or social duties, they mean to establish a false principle of obligation, invented by their own words, to oppose the word of God.

Such are the consequences which proceed from distinguishing upon the principle or source of religious obligation, which does not admit of a distinction or division; yet this task has been recommended to us with all imaginable art and address of human learning, through the wisdom of philosophy, in order to find a support for the false and enthusiastic conceit of some inherent internal principle of truth, for a rule of life in ourselves, different or independent of the WORD of God.

We may see very clearly, that in the heathen world it was impossible for the mind of a contemplative man to find rest, who was busied with enquiring after the true principle of life, merely by attending to his own experience and observation, or to what other men, from the same principle of their own knowledge, could afford; and from hence we have the perfect solution of that difficulty which might arise to us in accounting for the various opinions of the philosophers about the source of obligation to moral duties; for as they did not acknowledge the AUTHORITY of the word of the true God, they were of course liable to endless wanderings, in search for other obligations to virtue or morality, different from the truth; so that each man of them would either look upon himself as OBLIGED to walk according to the suggestions of his own mind, whence he would recommend his own reasonings as a rule of life to others in the school of his wisdom; or if he declined such sort of enquiries, he had the examples and precepts of other men to guide him by authority

of some great name or names, to which men are naturally fond of subscribing.

But after this apology, which is easily found, and should as readily be admitted, in excuse for the fruitless researches of those wise men in the pursuit of truth, it will be difficult to defend the *AFFECTED* ignorance of the Christian philosopher at this day, complaining of doubtfulness and obscurity in fixing the principles and motives of moral obligation, and endeavouring, when he has the perfect *WILL* and *WORD* of God in his hands, to persuade himself and others to desert with him, and to find out their *OBLIGATIONS* in the schools of human wisdom; hereby recommending one, or other, or all those motives, which are borrowed from our imaginary conceits of a *MORAL SENSE OF TASTE*, or the *FITNESS* of *THINGS*, from ideas of *BEAUTY* and *ORDER*, or what is *RIGHT* and *FIT*, according to our own knowledge and discernment, for the true principle of life.

It has been usual with these writers of the moral class, who would persuade us to adopt their social sentiments, in new treatises of peculiar refinement, to address their readers with many good words and fair speeches, commending their acuteness and discernment in such like performances; adding large encomiums, well placed for their purpose, upon the great learning and sagacity of this present age, to which they are writing. In these particulars it does not concern us to enter into contest with them, any farther than to observe the methods which are practised to usurp *AUTHORITY*, and to find admission for their *OWN WORDS*, to lead other men after them; so as at the same time they give all due praises to our learning and diligence: they mean, however, to *DICTATE* some rule for us to walk by, which of course they would have us *BELIEVE* in, as much more perfect than any other we had known before, for our direction in life.

But the sophistical dissingenuity of the deistical moralist is of small importance to be complained of, when

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compared with other parts of his dangerous insinuation ; for as the great purpose of his industry is to divert our attention from the word of God, his endeavours must be exerted in such manner as will be most likely, according to the circumstances of the times, to accomplish this end ; and at present, while men are very confident of the fulness and sufficiency of reason, the most direct method to answer his purpose is to supplant and destroy the authority of God's word, by making it of precarious obligation, unless it be acknowledged and supported by our reasonings, of its expediency and convenience to our own purposes of life ; that is, unless we think what God has commanded is right and fit ; or, according to the reason, or relations or fitnesses of things, our obligation to do his Will does cease of course ; or, which is the same thing, it must give way to RIGHT REASON, or to the dictates of OUR MORAL SENSE OR TASTE : a proposition which we have expressed in these words of some late writer on morals, who says, " The Will of God would be a very " slender obligation, if it were neither founded in the " reason of things, nor productive of any important " and interesting consequences."

By such like discourse, in the usual style of the moralizing fraternity, the foundation is laid for exerting OUR OWN AUTHORITY to the utmost extent ; so that after the adversary of true religion has practised all other methods of his address, to corrupt, and pervert, and suppress the word of Truth, he hath at length reverted to the very same point from which he set out, making open defiance, by his lies, in opposition to the truth of the Word of God.

It does very much concern every man, who means to be faithful to God, in obedience to his holy Will, revealed by his Word, to take heed of such dangerous examples, and to beware of these presumptuous self-sufficient reasoners, who do not scruple to set up their own wisdom in the highest place, perversely and blasphemously accommodating their despicable notions of

POSITIVE COMMAND and MERE ARBITRARY WILL in puny tyrants of the earth, to the order and equity of the divine government.

After this account of the consequences arising from the false division or distinction of religious duties, under the two heads of Moral and Positive Obligation, we are called upon, for the sake of argument with the Moralists, to admit a distinction which has no place in the mind of any man who is intent upon truth; for the gospel of Christ having brought to light the true principles of life, to amend and reform the spirits of men, by that grace which is derived from him who is the blessed Author of our holy religion, it follows, that all the actions of a Christian life will be directed by faith, hope, and charity, without seeking after INVENTIONS of other motives or PRINCIPLES, to enforce the observance of our duty.

But the corrupted nature of man is impatient and averse to truth, and in this aversion that dangerous disease of our minds does consist, which we must labour to overcome, as we regard our lives, that is, the salvation of our souls.

This natural aversion to receive and obey the truth, which implies the contrary desire of abiding and resting upon lies, gives that advantage to the enemy of our souls, which he labours to improve by every artifice and insinuation of his malice and industry: and to compass his purpose in destroying our life, and our title to immortality, which our Lord brought to light, the adversary of his religion would persuade us to take up our rest in this present state, and of course will teach us to regard the actions of this life, in search after happiness for ourselves and our brethren, among the perishing comforts it affords, as the main end and purpose for which we were sent into this world.

The arguments and doctrines of worldly wisdom, which tend to cultivate this natural propensity in us, are still likely to find an easy admission; and all the subtilities of insinuating address to the appetites, and
passions,

passions, and prejudices of mankind, are industriously made use of by our adversary to gain upon our understandings to receive and to acquiesce under such specious and deceitful applications of the word of God, as may in the most effectual manner overcome its opposition to our corrupted nature, and those evil habits we have contracted by it.

By the clear informations of God's holy word we are forewarned of all the craftiness of our spiritual enemy, who is there stiled the God of this world, to signify to us, that they who pursue the things of this world, and make it their chief and principal concern to obtain them, are, in the sight of God, accounted the servants or subjects of that kingdom of this world, of which the evil spirit is the god or chief ruler; for his power is exerted by the management of temptations derived from the temporary, or perishing profits, or pleasures of this life, which are usurped by him and his instruments, for a season, as their gifts, to betray and seduce our souls from the hope of everlasting happiness, which is the gift of God.

After premising these observations, to which we are directed by the word of God, we make this distinction upon all actions of men for which they are accountable, that they are either of moral or religious obligation.

The actions of moral obligation are such as proceed from the consideration of our duty as members of society, united by common interest to support the welfare of a complicated body of individuals, of which we are a part: and as this union is made to supply the general wants of that body, in the most easy method, for the comfort of the whole community, every member is obliged to bear its part in discharging those offices or duties which, by general consent, are judged necessary to this end: hence it is that each individual that will act according to the reason or law of society, is BOUND to seek for its own happiness or welfare only by such means as conspire to promote the well-being of others to whom he is joined.

All the inventions of lawgivers, in the various institutions of human policies, have been directed to accomplish this end, by prescribing rules in all cases to hinder the interruption of the general welfare or peace of society, from the constant attention given by each individual to compass the ends of its own particular interest and happiness. But as individuals are brought into society by consideration of their insufficiency to live happily without it, the same motive or desire of enjoying the present pleasures and comforts of earthly things will prompt them to transgress its laws; that is, their regard to the preservation of order in society, in which they will consider themselves as more remotely concerned, will not always hinder them from seizing what may contribute to the immediate gratifications of appetite, in prejudice to the rights of other men: and in this circumstance, the great imperfection of society, instituted and upheld by human authority, does consist, that men in it are united and obliged, by the same motives of pleasure or pain, to consult the general happiness, that do also lead them to pursue their own particular interest, which may often appear to them inconsistent with it.

The uninstructed mind of man could never attain to the discovery of the original cause of all those wants and miseries of mankind, for which a remedy is sought after by the helps of society; and therefore, so long as men did continue in ignorance of that cause which brought DEATH into the world, the most perfect use and exercise of their REASON upon their present circumstances, would direct them to invent and practise such methods of life and action, as might best contribute to give ease to themselves and others to whom they were related in this present state; and of course the merit of their actions, estimated among themselves, would arise from their MORALITY or ETHICS, which terms denote that approved and customary method of behaviour which obtained in whatsoever country or city they might be placed.

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The Law of Nature is derived from the acknowledged principle of a natural equality among all mankind, and all treatises of morality or ethics, denote the application of that law to particular cases or persons; and the primary view or intention of that law, and of morality or ethics, is to lead men, and to continue them in the enjoyment of what is best for them in this world, considered as it appears to our reason, uninformed by divine revelation.

If the discoveries of the gospel had not come to us by our Lord, who hath brought life and immortality to light, the happiness of this life would always have appeared as the first and principal object of our pursuit; because we would never have known that the indulgence of our appetites and passions, so far at least as they might not seem injurious to others, would be in any degree inconsistent with our happiness hereafter; and therefore every man would take for the present what he might judge was best for him to enjoy. But as we are now taught to look for a better life, and a better country, they who would recommend MORALITY or ETHICS as the chief qualification for our future happiness, are guilty of an attempt to destroy our title to it, by teaching us to neglect the spiritual virtues which qualify us, through the grace of God, for his kingdom of heaven, and to be solicitous only for the practice of MORAL VIRTUES, which fix our attention upon the happiness of this life, as subjects of an earthly kingdom.

It is to be acknowledged, that in the heathen world, a moral man, a virtuous and a religious man, might be justly taken as terms of the like import; because the moral philosopher could not by his reasonings discover any better rule of life than what arose from the practice of morality, in contributing to make others and himself easy for the present time in the comforts of this life, and thereby to conspire in fulfilling the Law of Nature, by which every man in the Gentile world would judge or pronounce upon the quality

lity of his own, or the actions of other men; which rule of acting and judging is according to what the Apostle has observed upon their condition in this respect; *for when the Gentiles which have not the Law by divine revelation, as the Jews had, yet being led by the same principle and sanction of the moral Law, do by NATURE the things contained in the LAW; these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves, which shew the WORK of the Law written in their hearts, as being NATURALLY disposed to consider those OFFICES or WORKS as praise-worthy which agree to the precepts of the Moral Law in support of society; their conscience also bearing witness, the judgment or sentence of their own minds, exercised with what knowledge or instruction they have received, bearing witness to the same effect; and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or excusing one another, by referring their actions to that rule.*

In this place it may be proper to ascertain the meaning of the term (CONSCIENCE), which is derived from the Latin words (*cum scientiâ*), and being applied to signify the judgment we pass on our own actions, does imply, that in determination of their quality as good or bad, we refer them to that RULE by which we look upon ourselves to be OBLIGED, that is, by which we have conscience or knowledge we OUGHT to walk; and this rule has been various, according to the circumstances of mankind.

For example: As we have just now observed in the heathen world, the supreme rule of Conscience arose from MORAL considerations and practices, to ensure the GREATEST PUBLIC GOOD; to which end also their religious institutions were invented. Likewise under the Jewish dispensation, the rule of CONSCIENCE was the MORAL LAW of the two tables, taking in the ceremonial law as a guard to the AUTHORITY of the supreme Lawgiver. So that before St. Paul came to understand the wisdom of the gospel, by his miraculous conversion and instruction in it, he thought it was his duty to persecute the church of Christ, and looked upon himself

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as obliged in CONSCIENCE to keep up the Jewish law by destroying the Christians; and although for his error he thought himself unworthy to be called an Apostle of Christ, yet as he had acted according to that rule by which, as he then judged, he was obliged, he vindicated himself before the council of the Jews upon that account, when he said, *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day.*

Under the christian dispensation, the rule of CONSCIENCE does arise from the precepts and example of our Lord Jesus Christ; the perfect morality he taught in his discourses, and particularly in his sermon on the mount, comprehends all the rules of the moral law of the two tables, with such fulness of purity and perfection, as to remove all those false interpretations of it which the Jews had corruptly introduced. And to his instructions in righteousness, the perfect example of our Lord bare witness, who lived in such manner in this world, as to shew us the way, through the greatest afflictions, to hold fast our faith, and to seek for our happiness in his heavenly kingdom.

It is true, the purity of the christian morality does not agree with the purposes of our corrupted nature; and the wisdom of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, is inconsistent with the wisdom of the men of this world, recommending to our pursuit the honours, and power, and pleasures of it; and because of this contrariety and contradiction, they *have sought out many inventions* to discover and bring out a RULE of CONSCIENCE from within themselves; which in these latter days has produced those high conceits of an imaginary excellence and dignity, or self-sufficiency in human nature, or in the powers of our own minds, which the deistical freethinkers are fain to boast of, as if they were able to point out and to direct us by their dictates to our true interest and happiness.

The duties of RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION are derived by FAITH from the word of God, enlightening our understandings with the knowledge of divine truth, and
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setting aside our OWN REASONINGS upon the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by our senses, which by disobedience to the WORD of GOD became the corrupt principle of action to our first parents and their posterity. The END of RELIGION, and of all RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS, is to recover mankind from the consequences of their FALL from God, that is, by restoring them to his favour, to rescue them from misery and death. The way of accomplishing this end is pointed out in the holy scriptures, opening a view of the providential history of mankind, and conducting us, by clear information of all events that relate to that great purpose of God's mercy, from the first discovery of his NAME to Abraham the father of the FAITHFUL, unto his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, the MESSIAH promised to the Jews; who came in the fulness of time, by divine appointment, *to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy*; the whole order and method of God's mercy, and the œconomy of his grace, being completed and consummated in him.

There is not any circumstance relating to our salvation that is more clearly and distinctly laid before us in the holy scriptures, than the insufficiency and utter incapacity we labour under in going about to establish our own righteousness, instead of the righteousness of God; that is, when we propose, by the observance of moral duties, from whence the righteousness of men compared among themselves does arise, to become acceptable in the sight of God: to this purpose St. Paul has argued most abundantly throughout his epistles, and particularly to the Romans, concerning his brethren the Jews: *What shall we say then?* as the sum of the whole argument, it is this, *that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, being ignorant of the true God, and of the moral law given by his authority, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith, as believers in Christ, are justified freely by his grace, and*
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accepted by him. *But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness*, being zealous of the performances of the moral and ceremonial law, *hath not attained to the law of righteousness*, and are not justified in the sight of God. *Wherefore?* because *they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the deeds of the law*; that is, they sought to be approved as righteous in the sight of God, by fulfilling the offices or acts of the moral and ceremonial law, not considering *that the just shall live by faith*; for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness imputed to us by faith in Jesus Christ, and going about to establish their own righteousness by the works or deeds of the law, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, by embracing his promises of a SAVIOUR, in acknowledging their MESSIAH OUR LORD.

The very same arguments which are urged by the Apostle against the Jews seeking for righteousness by the law, do equally extend to those Judaizing Christians, who do now endeavour to persuade us, that the sum of our Religion does consist in the performance of SOCIAL DUTIES; as if the spiritual and refined morality of the gospel were only designed to make men sociable and benevolent, in accommodating one another with the comforts of this life; so that instead of teaching, as the Apostles do, *that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, they mean to take off all difficulties from our Religion, in drawing pleasant pictures of it by the warmth of imagination, and are fain to instruct us by their OWN KNOWLEDGE in such ways of happiness, that we may conclude with them, *it is good to be here*.

The purposes of such teachers will be defeated, when we hold out that distinction against their reasonings, which we derive from the word of God, and refuse to admit in our controversy with them, the indiscriminate use of terms they mean to pass upon us as equivalent

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or of the same signification, or as so strictly united, they would seem to infer or imply the same thing: thus it is they expect we should allow, that a moral man or a DECENT man is always a religious man, and that MORALITY and RELIGION, TRUE RELIGION and VIRTUE, are terms much to the same purpose, which they who are acquainted with their usual stile can easily observe; so that they industriously confound all distinction between RELIGIOUS and MORAL OBLIGATIONS, which for their sake we should industriously maintain, since the difference between them must be especially attended to in all our arguments on the side of Religion; for although it be certain, which we have before observed, that a religious man has no need of making such a distinction for his own use, as his principle of FAITH in the word of God will lead him to the discharge of all moral duties; yet it does not necessarily follow, on the other hand, that because we may be looked upon in society of decent moral behaviour, we are therefore to be accounted RELIGIOUS MEN in the sight of God.

But further: We cannot admit that the sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments, which are peculiar to the spiritaual law of the gospel-revelation, should now be deemed the sanctions of the MORAL LAW or the LAW of NATURE, and that the chief purpose of this last discovery of God's mercy and grace to mankind, was intended, by the terrors of the Lord, and by the hopes of salvation, merely to engage us in performing the best offices in our power to make one another easy for this present life. Such consequences would most certainly arise from the Religion of Christ having its due influence on the minds of men, that it would bring peace on earth; but the first and main purpose of it, is to give *Glory to God in the highest*, by the wonderful dispensation of his mercy conducting us to heaven, which accomplishes this end by such means as will also bring on earth peace, good will towards men, being reconciled to God, and in charity with one another.

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His religion is misrepresented and misunderstood, when we are taught to look upon it as the instrument of our temporal prosperity; and that it must follow, in consequence of our making others and ourselves happy at the present, according to our MORAL SENSE OR TASTE, we shall of course be happy hereafter.

If we take the account of our Religion from the word of God, it implies, that we should believe in him, and in his promises, that through the merits of our Redeemer we shall be recovered from our fallen state, and restored to his favour, being delivered from our sins by his grace, and from the course of this evil world, in which the enemy does continually surround us by his devices of sensual allurements to divert our attention, and to betray us from the pursuit of everlasting happiness, unto the perishing joys of this transitory state: and therefore we must beware of his artifice to kindle in our hearts the most eager and passionate desire after the things of this world, by leading us to conclude, that the Religion of Christ was instituted to make us more easy and happy in it than ever the Heathens or Jews had been before his coming upon earth. Our blessed Master and his Apostles have taken especial notice of this dangerous insinuation, and have instructed all his followers to beware of the LOVE of this WORLD, and to make such account of it, *that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*; which warning did not concern only the Apostles, or the first converts to christianity, as we might fondly suppose, but *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution*; that is, every man who gives due attention to carry on the business of his salvation, will be sure to meet with many assaults, and grievous temptations cast in his way, by the enemy of his soul, to obstruct and pervert him in his pursuit. And although it may please God to recompence his faithful servants who had left or resigned what they had in the world for his sake, and to overpay them again in great abundance of earthly prosperity, in *houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers,*
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and children, and lands ; yet these advantages are not promised but *with persecutions*, arising from the watchful industry and subtil artifices of the enemy.

If we apply the distinction between religious and moral obligations to the moral treatises and discourses which are offered to us by the pretended friends, or the enemies of the truth, it will direct us in resolving the perplexed insinuations of their addresses, by which they endeavour to get above our understandings, and to hold them in error of subjection to their reasonings, excluding or opposing the word of God.

We give our consent to a licence of inventing false principles, when we admit, that moral obligations ought to have the first place in all considerations of our behaviour in this world ; for this will infer, that we should worship God, to become more happy for the present time, and more useful to one another in this life ; which lays the foundation of computing the merits of good works, and the terms of our acceptance with God, upon such articles as best agree with our own dispositions, leading us to believe, that the happiness of this world, as we would NATURALLY wish to enjoy it, is no ways inconsistent with our being happy hereafter. In order to prove this point, as it has been diversified and exhibited under various disguises, the whole address of our adversary has been employed, to maintain by it his usurped dominion over the understandings of men.

All false principles of action are derived originally from that one of the deceitful knowledge of good and evil by our senses, which, by disobedience, became the corrupted source of our reasoning, to lead us astray from our true interest and happiness : and if the word of God had not been sent forth for our recovery, we should still have continued in endless wanderings, to search for our CHIEF GOOD, as the Heathens did, by REASON, OR RIGHT REASON, OR MORAL SENSE, or the greatest PUBLIC GOOD, or some one or other, or all of those FITNESSES OF THINGS OR RELATIONS, which do
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finally terminate in the design of preserving order, or decency, or peace, among us for the present time.

Such like principles divert our attention from the pursuit of everlasting happiness, which is the real interest and concern of our lives, and, instead of it, recommend an eagerness and solicitude for the trivial accommodations of this transitory state. In aid of this purpose, the enemy has not only been successful to prompt us, after his own example, to set up our own words, in direct opposition to the word of God; but yet also he would teach us,

2. To draw false consequences from the truth, and to supplant it, after we have acknowledged its divine authority. A dangerous instance of his address in this kind is what we have just now observed, in the design of perverting the purpose of the Christian dispensation, to make it the instrument of temporal happiness, according to the course of this world, and to bring it down to gratify the appetites, and passions, and fantastical humours of mankind, by persuading us, that we discharge our duty to our brethren in such manner, as to make us also acceptable unto God, when we are ready to do them such offices, as make them easy or happy for the present time, according to their own corrupted taste and judgment of things.

This artifice, which has been industriously supported by the deistical moralizing philosophers of the latter days, was the very first device the enemy laid hold upon, to obstruct and suppress the propagation of the gospel, and gave occasion to that malice and enmity to the blessed author of it, which put an end to his life upon earth.

The opposition of the Jewish nation to the doctrines of Christianity did arise from the conviction they had of the divine authority of the law given by Moses, and of the end of the law, affording them assurance of temporal happiness and prosperity, for encouraging their obedience to it. From these principles they reasoned falsely, by supposing that the PROMISES of God concerning

their Messiah would be accomplished in sending them a TEMPORAL PRINCE, by whose reign their nation would be exalted to the highest degree of worldly prosperity, according to those hopes they had conceived from the TEMPORAL BLESSINGS, promised upon their observance of the moral and ceremonial commands of God.

On this account the Jews have laboured under a stronger prejudice against the truth of the gospel, than the nations of the heathen world had to contend with; for besides the natural propensity of all mankind to rest their happiness in this life upon the principle recommending to them the pleasures of sense, the Jews had moreover the authority of divine revelation, to fix their attention to that principle which was taken to be the sanction of their LAW.

Both they and we have no other method to escape from the delusion of walking by that principle, but by laying aside our own reasonings upon outward objects of SIGHT, to give strict attention to the word of God. In their case our Lord himself pronounced, that *if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* That is, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, declaring the circumstances and the character, the life and the death of their Messiah, for accomplishing the great end of his coming, according to the first promise which was given of him to mankind, they will not BELIEVE, through the evidence of their senses, though one rose from the dead to convince them of the TRUTH, as he prophetically foretold in these words, that his own resurrection would be ineffectual for that purpose.

So that when the great design of our Lord's conversation upon earth, and of his sufferings, and of his death, was consummated in his triumph over death, having *abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*; this miraculous evidence of his divine authority and commission was, nevertheless, insufficient for the conviction of the Jewish nation, because

cause they held fast the principle of the Law of Nature, and argued falsely from it, by fixing their attention to earthly things, in opposition to the spiritual blessings promised to their fathers, which were to be derived by them to all mankind, through their FAITH in a Saviour, the Messiah.

This observation, which accounts for the greater prejudice of the Jewish nation against believing in a suffering Messiah, and their consequent rejection of him and his religion, will serve to explain some reasonings of St. Paul, which do appear obscure upon that subject; particularly in his Epistle to the Romans, in which he justifies the impartial methods of Divine Wisdom, in conducting the dispensations of grace and mercy, both towards the Jews and the Gentiles.

S E C T. XI.

The Arguments of St. Paul to the Jews and Gentiles from Prophecy.

IN order to remove the prejudice conceived by the Jewish nation against a suffering Messiah, St. Paul proves, that the benefits of a Saviour were originally designed to extend to all mankind, according to the promises of God. The first of them, given to our first parents at the time of their fall, is to be accounted the foundation of all the subsequent promises, and the general support of all the hopes of mankind. To this effect the Prophet Isaiah, as quoted by St. Paul, hath said of the Messiah, *Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed*; upon which the Apostle argues, *for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek*. It is not a matter of any account in the sight of God, whether we are of one family or of another, or of this or that nation; his regards are not confined to such outward circumstances, neither are his blessings of such a limited nature, as to make one nation only happy by the pos-

session of them, *for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that CALL UPON HIM*, by having FAITH in his word; which is also according to the declaration of another prophet, Joel ii. 32. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.*

This declaration, made in favour of all mankind, does suppose that they are put into a capacity of calling upon the NAME of the Lord; but if his NAME were to be confined to the Jewish nation alone, as their God, in this case the Gentiles could have no hopes from it; for *how then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not HEARD? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?* So that before the Gentiles could be admitted to call upon the Name of the Lord, they must first be taught to BELIEVE in it, by PREACHERS SENT to them by divine authority for that purpose, which was done accordingly by the ministry of our Lord and his Apostles, the messengers of peace and reconciliation with God unto all mankind, which the prophet has declared, *as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.* Or, as the words stand in the book of Isaiah, lii. 7. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Sion, Thy God reigneth:* which expressions appear to have a peculiar reference to the divine sermon made by our Lord himself upon the Mount, instructing his disciples of the Jewish nation, the sons of Sion, in those refined lessons of spiritual morality, which were to convey the knowledge of the true God by his authority throughout the world; and therefore the Prophet so describes him *that saith unto Sion, Thy God reigneth over all the earth.*

Such therefore is the mercy of God, that he hath afforded these means of salvation to declare his NAME by preachers commissioned and sent by him for this end

end through all nations of the world ; *but they have not all obeyed the gospel*, which has been clearly foreseen and declared by his holy spirit ; *for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report ?* A declaration, which not only assures us of the foreknowledge of God, concerning the opposition his truth in the gospel would meet with, but which also confirms what the Apostle had observed before of the means necessary to salvation, that preachers must be sent to make REPORT of the truth, before the world could BELIEVE in the NAME of God. So then FAITH cometh by HEARING of instruction, and this instruction of HEARING by the WORD of GOD : *But I say*, is it not clear by divine appointment, that the Gentiles should be instructed in the knowledge and worship of the true God, *have they not heard*, by the preachers that have been sent to them ? *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world :* *but I say*, Did not Israel know, that the Gentiles were to be taken into the church of God ? This surely is evident from the prophetic writings : *First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, in the clearest expressions declaring the coming in of the Gentiles, and saith, as in the Name of God, I was found of them that sought me not ; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me, as being utter strangers to my covenant with the Jews : But unto Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people, who were not to be moved from their own false reasonings, by the most earnest and affectionate addresses.*

I say then, in consequence of these prophetic declarations concerning the obstinacy of the Jewish nation in rejecting the truth of the gospel, *Hath God cast away his people ? God forbid ; for I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin : God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.* His purposes will take effect, according to his foreknowledge of those

instruments he has made choice of, who will be sufficient to accomplish what he has designed in separating the nation of Israel from all other people; for in like manner as the Jews have now rejected the Messiah, so also, in former times, they apostatized to idolatry; in proof of which, *Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal: even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* That is, notwithstanding the greater part of the Jewish nation doth reject the terms of the NEW COVENANT, to hold by the OLD one, in seeking for justification by works, yet at this time there is a remnant who do embrace the free mercy of God by Faith in their Saviour, according to the election of grace; and if by grace, then it is no more by works. That is, their election, or acceptance with God, does not arise from their merit in observing the terms of the Moral Law; otherwise, grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.

This distinction is to be accurately observed; so that the promises of God for justification are made to those only who believe in a Saviour, which condition sets aside the Law of Works; for *by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh justified in his sight.* And the error of the Jewish nation lies in their holding by that law, and by those statutes by which they could not live; since, according to the terms of that law, they are all guilty before God, who says by the Psalmist, *There is none that doeth good, no not one.* And so the LAW of NATURE, after full trial made of its unprofitableness, under every advantage that could be granted, to enforce it in favour of that people, was set aside by the spiritual laws of God's grace, which are conveyed by the means of this peculiar people, through the preaching

ing of the Messiah and his Apostles, to all other nations of the earth.

What then was the consequence of this dispensation of grace? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for. The greater part of the nation hath refused the NEW COVENANT of Grace, to adhere to the LAW of WORKS, and therefore hath not attained to righteousness, or to the favour of God, which they seek for in vain by it; *but the election hath obtained it;* the chosen instruments of God in that nation, according to his foreknowledge of their dispositions have attained to justification by grace, *and the rest were blinded, according as it is written of them in the prophecy of Isaiah, xxix. 10. God hath given them the spirit of slumber,* by the dispensation of the law, which inclined their hearts to rest, and to depend solely upon it, so as by looking after the temporal blessings annexed to the observance of it, and hearkening to the promises of earthly happiness and prosperity, it has come to pass, through these privileges derived to them, as the peculiar people of God, that, as the prophet has expressed it, *he hath given them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day.* That is, they have given no attention to any object addressed to their understandings by means of their eyes and ears, but to such only as affect and gratify their bodily senses *unto this day.*

In consequence of their depravity in adhering to gross and sensual gratifications, *David saith,* with earnest wishes for their disappointment in such sort of contemptible pleasures, as they have perversely made choice of, Psalm lxix. 22. *Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them,* for the folly they have been guilty of. *Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see those sorts of worldly joys they seek after, and bow down their back alway,* under subjection and servitude, instead of that eminency and superiority they do vainly desire, ac-

cording to their own depraved imaginations concerning it.

I say then, Has this forlorn and distressed condition of the Jewish nation been determined upon them, according to the counsel of God? Have they stumbled that they should fall? Was it by divine appointment that a stumbling-block was laid in their way, on purpose that they might fall and be rejected? God forbid; but (rather) on the contrary, God's mercy is still reserved for them, as through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy, that they should enquire and learn by what means the Gentiles are taken into the church of God, and may with them also be converted unto the truth.

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, which was thereupon enlightened with divine truth, and the diminishing of them be the riches of the Gentiles, who came into the church of God, when the body or greater part of the Jewish nation had fallen from it, by rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, how much more their fulness, coming into the Christian church, will be profitable unto the world? That is, when the Jews are restored again to the true church, and to the favour of God, they will contribute to the riches of the world, and to the riches of the Gentiles, more abundantly than can be conceived until that glorious event is accomplished.

For I speak to you Gentiles, by this declaration concerning the conversion of the Jewish nation, inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine own office, in setting forth the consequences of the publication of the gospel, if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh; to excite these my kinsmen of the Jewish nation to make some diligent enquiry into that doctrine we preach; and might save some of them; for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, through faith in a Saviour, who was rejected and put to death by the Jews, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? a circumstance

stance of joy and triumph both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, as wonderful and glorious, as a resurrection from death unto life.

The subsequent part of St. Paul's discourse upon this subject, concerning the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles to take their place in the church of God, is chiefly intended to suppress any high conceits that might arise in the minds of the Gentile converts, upon their admission to that inestimable privilege of being acknowledged for the people of God; as they might be apt to prefer and exalt themselves in their own opinions on this account above the Jews. To beat down such conceits, the Apostle argues from the choice God had made of the ancestors of the Jewish nation, who were most eminently distinguished for their faith and obedience to the commands of God, that for their sakes their descendants were accounted as holy unto the Lord; *For if the first fruit be holy, the lump also is holy; and if the root be holy, so also are the branches: and if some of the branches are broken off, and thou being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.*

All the privileges which thou who art a Gentile dost enjoy by faith in the true God, and by the knowledge of his Will, derived to thee in the gospel, thou hast received them by the Jews; whereas, on the other hand, the Jews have found no help or assistance from thee.

Thou wilt say then, as the last argument thou hast to rely upon, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith: be not high-minded, but fear. Remember that the Jews were cast off for their unbelief in the word of God; for when the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled by our Lord, they would not acknowledge his authority, though he appealed to Moses and the prophets in confirmation of it; and they, by not attending unto them, continued in
unbelief

unbelief of him and his doctrine, *and thou standest by faith* in him, having thereby admission into his church; for this reason beware of having any opinion of thy own superior excellency or worthiness, by which conceit thou mayest also fall from this privilege, and therefore *be not high minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches* when they were guilty of infidelity, *take heed lest he also spare not thee*, if thou dost presume to impute the merit of thy acceptance with him to any other cause but to thy FAITH in his word. *Behold, therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted CONTRARY to NATURE into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?

The sum of which reasoning is to this effect: The Apostle declares by it, that the severity of God towards the Jews did arise from their unbelief in his word, by prophetic designations, pointing out their Messiah in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the Messiah by his life, and his sufferings, and his death; and therefore upon rejection of him through unbelief in the holy writings, which were in their hands, and by refusing to come into the dispensation of grace in the gospel, after full trial had been made of the unprofitableness of the LAW of NATURE for justification unto life, their church and nation were cut off from the divine favour and protection, and so they have come by the severity of God to be scattered and dispersed among the nations.

But the Gentiles, who have embraced the faith in Christ, are recommended to the goodness of God by believing in his word, and searching the scriptures whether those things were so foretold of the Messiah, which were done and suffered by our Lord Christ; whence they

they are confirmed in their faith in him as the Saviour promised to all mankind from the beginning, who appeared *when the fullness of time was come*, according to the mercy and truth of God.

Hence we see that the admission of the Gentile converts into the church of God does altogether depend upon their BELIEVING in his word, and in his promises; and on the other hand, the rejection of the Jewish nation has proceeded from their infidelity or mistrust in the word of God, which they have perversly misunderstood and misinterpreted, according to their own vain reasonings about temporal things.

But if the Jews abide not still in unbelief, they shall be grafted into the body of the church of God, being now more nearly related to him as the natural branches of the faithful fathers of their nation, and therefore more worthy of being readily received into his favour again, than the Gentiles were at their conversion to Christianity, being then cut out of the olive tree which is wild by NATURE, having no knowledge of God, nor any acquaintance with his will or with his service.

After this observation the Apostle proceeds yet farther to inform his brethren of the Gentile world, who were converted to christianity, that the reason of his instruction to them on this subject, was to prevent the danger they might be in, of conceiving high opinions of their own superiority in understanding above the Jews; *for I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery*, which is a secret of divine wisdom that you could never attain to without the revelation of it from the Holy Spirit, and therefore you are informed of it, *lest ye should be wise in your own conceits*, by imputing your conversion and belief in the truth of the gospel, to some peculiar excellency and discernment in your own understandings above those who are of the Jewish nation, that continue in unbelief: but in this conceit you would be deceived; for the true account is, *that blindness in part hath happened to Israel* by means of that dispensation of divine government under which they have

have lived, to become the instruments of God's mercy to mankind, and this blindness will only continue *until the fulness of the Gentiles come in* to the church of God, by which event the Jews will be awakened to give their attention also, and to embrace the truth in the gospel, *And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer*, who hath been promised to them, and by their believing in him, he *shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them*, in the promises I have made unto them of the Messiah, which covenant will then be accepted and mutually confirmed, *when I shall take away their sins*; which cannot be done by legal observances, but only through their faith and obedience unto the gospel of Christ.

But to conclude this discourse concerning the different conditions of the Gentile converts to Christianity, and the body of the Jewish nation, who have as yet rejected the terms of the new covenant, it is made known to you Gentiles in relation to the Jews, that *as concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake*, that you may see by their example the consequences of infidelity, but in respect to themselves, *as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers sakes; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God*, and so were not converted to become members of his church which he had planted in the nation of Israel, *yet have now obtained mercy* by being instructed in the knowledge of God, derived from the preachers of the gospel, who have turned to you from the Jews *through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*

By these methods of divine wisdom, directed to accomplish the salvation of all men, *God hath concluded them all in unbelief*, as being unable, through the weakness and prejudices of their own minds, and the backwardness and perverseness of their wills, either to understand or to comply with the means which were necessary

cessary to that end; so that the Gentiles were not moved to come into the church of God, and to embrace the terms of his first covenant with the Jews; and in like manner the greater part of the Jewish nation have as yet refused to obey the gospel, and so have continued to reject the conditions of the second covenant, as the Gentiles had done the first; but by the infinite wisdom of God, they will become mutually the instruments of converting each other, according to his gracious purposes, *that he might have mercy upon all.*

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

A reflection suitable to the importance of that glorious object the Apostle then had in his view, contemplating the methods of God's mercy, in conducting his great design for the salvation of all mankind; and by due admiration of the wisdom and knowledge of God in directing his instruments to this end, the Jews and Gentiles will be taught to conceive rightly of their own conditions respectively, as related to each other under the guidance of our merciful God the common parent of all mankind, who hath brought both Jews and Gentiles alternately into his church, that through the difference he had made between them by the dispensations of his mercy, they might alternately conspire to bring his gracious purposes to pass, for establishing his kingdom over all the earth, through our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the truth of his gospel.

A design of such wonderful comprehension and extent, and so deep in riches of wisdom and knowledge, displayed in the execution of it, that no man as of himself, or by his own reason or understanding, could in any sort conceive, or give any assistance in furthering this great work of the Lord, *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Another

Another instance of drawing false consequences from the truth, in order to supplant it, after acknowledging its divine authority, is that device which St. Paul takes notice of in his epistle to the Galatians, which was introduced among the Gentile converts to Christianity by some zealots of the Jewish constitution, who did endeavour to persuade the Christians of Galatia, that they ought to receive circumcision, and all the ritual observances of the Jewish church, as necessary also under the gospel.

To obviate this design, the Apostle appeals to their own experience of the power of his ministry, by which they had received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were conveyed to them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon their believing in him.

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the bearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

After ye have been enlightened with the knowledge of spiritual truth by the gospel, whereby you have received, through faith in God's word, the grace of his Holy Spirit, to heal up the disorders and spiritual maladies of your souls, are ye not aware of the cheat which your false teachers would now put upon you, who would persuade you to be so foolish as to betake yourselves to fulfill the works of the law, to be *made perfect by the flesh*, in complying with circumcision and other fleshly ordinances, and thereby to set up the Mosaical Law in the chief place, as necessary to make perfect the justification or righteousness of those persons who had, by faith, embraced the terms of the gospel.

Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. Have ye learned the spiritual lessons of self-denial, and the taking up of the cross, that ye might be reclaimed from the love of this world; which will be to no purpose, if we must still attend to the temporal promises of the law, encouraging your obedience to it, by fleshly or carnal motives?

He therefore that ministreth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the bearing of faith? Are not the miracles you have seen wrought by us among you, and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit you have received, were they not all conveyed in the name of our Lord Jesus, in consequence of our faith, and of your own, by believing in him? These gifts bear witness of our acceptance with God, through the manifestation of his power approving the sincerity of our faith; for it is upon this account alone we are justified in his sight; *even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* The powerful faith of Abraham was approved by his attention and obedience to the word of God, when the commands of God did, at the time of his receiving them, appear to be utterly inconsistent, in all human reasoning, with the purpose or promise made along with them; whether we regard the first command, when God said to him, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee, and I will make of thee a great nation;* or whether we consider that other command to sacrifice his son: in both cases he might have justly reasoned according to appearances, that he was neither likely to become the head of a powerful nation by leaving his own family and kindred, to go into a strange country, neither could it be, that if he killed his son Isaac he should ever be the father of many nations by him; and therefore Abraham, by reasoning according to the Law of Nature, might have suspected that by this command, God meant to retract and disannul his covenant with Isaac, which he had promised to establish with him; and so Abraham might have been prompted to follow his own will, and disobey the command of God.

But as Abraham withstood this temptation by faith in God's word, *know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* From this instance of Abraham's faith being superior to all considerations

siderations that would have tempted him to doubtfulness or disbelief in the word or the promise of God, he became thereby the father of the faithful; so that *they which are of faith*, being influenced in their lives by his example and belief, *the same are the children of Abraham*, according to the promise of God, and as such are esteemed in his sight.

And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed; that is, to this same purpose the Holy Spirit in another part of the scripture, foreseeing or declaring, by prophetic designation, that method by which the heathen also should be justified through faith in the Messiah, *preached, before the approbation was given to the faith of Abraham, the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* Which is in short terms a comprehensive description of the design and purpose of the new covenant, that is, of the gospel.

So then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham; for as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Which is a condition that no man was able to observe, and therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil.

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident from the express words of the prophet, for the just shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith: for that merit or recommendation to the favour of God which we lay claim to by the Law, is not built on faith, but on works fulfilling the moral and ceremonial commandments of the law, that so according to the condition, *the man that doeth them shall live in them.*

This then being the condition of us who were under the law, *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Christ, the Messiah, our Mediator and Representative, to rescue us from the curse

curse which, according to the terms of the law, fell upon every one of us, became, in our stead, liable to it, *being made a curse for us*, which was accomplished in the manner of his death by hanging on a cross; *for it is written*, Deut. xxi. 23. *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*; by which he made reconciliation for us, who are of the Jewish nation, and for all others also of the Gentile world, *that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*. For the communication of the grace of God by his Holy Spirit to the children of Abraham in the true faith, is the sum or substance of that glorious blessing or privilege which is to be deriyed from him to all nations of the earth, according to the promises of God in the Messiah our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle proceeds by another argument to prove that circumcision and the ritual observances of the Jewish law were to give place to the gospel, which was the covenant made originally with Abraham by promise, long before the delivery of the law; upon which account, in point of time, it did precede the law, although it be in the prophetic style called the **NEW COVENANT**, Jerem. xxxi. 31. which refers to the time of the personal appearance of the Mediator, in and by whom it was confirmed. By observing this circumstance the Apostle argues,

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man dissannulleth or addeth thereto: now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made; he saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ. So that by the terms of the original promise made by God to Abraham, which established the covenant with him and his seed, there is no foundation for any such distinction between the children of Abraham, who are intitled to the promised blessing, as that some of them should be his children by faith, and others his children according to the law of works; for the express words

of the promise confine it to that ONE SEED, which is Christ the Messiah, who is the head of that body of the faithful, who are the children of Abraham, or his seed.

And this I say, as before, in arguing after the manner of men, the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect; so the case would be, that the promise of God would have none effect, if the observance of the Mosaical law were necessary to intitle the Children of Abraham to inherit the blessing promised to him and his seed; for if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise. The inheritance does cease to be a FREE GIFT by promise, if we are obliged to do the works of the law, that we may be intitled to it; and this would contradict the manifest declaration of scripture, which is clear and expresse, that *God gave it to Abraham by promise as a FREE GIFT.*

After the Apostle has proved by these arguments, that the observance of the moral and ceremonial law is not the condition requisite to intitle the children of Abraham to the blessing promised to all nations in him; he comes to a very important question, which appears to arise immediately from the subject-matter of his discourse; that seeing it is so as he has shewn, that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law, which is superseded by the gospel-covenant, to what purpose was the law given? and why were the peculiar people of God separated from all other nations under that dispensation? *Wherefore then (serveth) the law?* To this he answers, *it was added because of transgressions* committed against the LAW of REASON or the LAW of NATURE, which was common to all mankind, to prove by the example of the Jewish nation, living under the LAW of NATURE, perfected, and explained, and enforced by divine authority in the Mosaical dispensation, that they were not able to attain unto righteousness by the works of the law, under the most favourable circumstances

stances and encouragements that could be given to engage their obedience to it; so that the law was added to the oeconomy of God's mercy, because of transgressions to which mankind are liable through the original corruption of their nature, derived from that KNOWLEDGE which became the principle of their actions by their apostacy, and by which they are disabled from attaining unto righteousness in the sight of God, by the Law of Nature or of Works, to which they are naturally inclined to subject themselves; and so long this trial of the Jewish nation, to *convince the world of sin*, was to continue, *till the seed should come to whom the promise was made of reconciling all nations unto God*; or as the prophet Ezekiel has summed up the consequences of the coming of the Messiah, *to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.*

But the Apostle proceeds yet farther to observe, in relation to the law, that the promised blessing was not conveyed by it, for *it was ordained by angels*, commissioned from the divine presence in a dreadful form of solemnity appearing on mount Sinai, and delivered by the two tables of stone *in the hand of a Mediator: now a Mediator is not a Mediator of one party, but God is one party*, and the seed to whom the promise was made is the other party; and therefore the promised blessing was not given with the law; for the Messiah in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ was not then come, and so of course was not there present.

But another question does arise from hence; that seeing the law was not the means of conferring the promised blessing, *Is the law against the promises of God?* Does the observance of it disqualify or make us unfit to inherit the blessing? *God forbid* we should have this mistaken conception of it; for *if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law*; if there could have been a law of works

given, which could have recovered mankind from their fallen, sinful, and mortal state, and so have given them life, verily righteousness, or justification in the sight of God, should have been by the law of the Mosaical dispensation, which exhibited the Law of Nature under all the most favourable circumstances that could recommend it to our observance; *but the scripture hath concluded all under sin*; that is, the holy Spirit of God, by which the scripture is dictated, hath foreseen the inability and utter incapacity of man, in his fallen state, to observe the covenant or conditions of the law of works, and therefore hath concluded all men under sin, and subject unto death, *that the promise, by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe*; that so the promised blessing of peace with God, and the communication of his grace, as an earnest of everlasting life, derived from faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah, might be given to those who believe in the merits of his sufferings and death, to redeem them from death, which is the just consequence of their own transgressions.

In regard to the particular condition of the Jews under the dispensation of the law, the Apostle speaks in behalf of himself and his brethren of that nation, *that before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed*. Before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath opened the way of our justification by faith, we were kept under severe discipline, by the manifold painful and rigorous injunctions of the law, by which our attention was so engaged and circumscribed, that we were shut up, as it were in some narrow room, unto the time of our freedom came by the faith, which should afterwards be revealed in the gospel: *wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*; for it instructed us in such works as we ought to do, and gave sentence of punishment upon the offenders; but it did not at all enable us to perform obedience to it: and therefore, as being continual transgressors against the law, and liable by it unto death, it taught us the necessity

cessity of coming unto Christ, *that we might be justified by faith*, through the FREE GIFT and mercy of God to all true believers in him.

This brings the Apostle to observe again, that they who have embraced the terms of the gospel, are free from the legal and ritual observances of the Jewish law; for *after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*. The end of the law is Christ, and the purpose of it is answered, when it hath brought us unto him; for *ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*; and therefore ye can attain to no higher privileges, if ye should encumber yourselves with the legal ordinances; for *as many of you as have been baptized into Christ*, being thereby regenerated, or begotten again of God, and so raised up from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness, *ye have put on Christ*, and are, in the sight of God, accounted as living members of his body; so that *there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*.

All those sorts of distinctions, whether national or personal, which make great differences among us, conversing with one another in this world, they are of no consideration at all in the sight of God, to give any preference or precedency, or privilege to one Christian above another; for all Christians are one seed and one body in Christ Jesus, who is the head over all; and if ye be Christ's, whether ye are Jews or Gentiles, *then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise made to Abraham*, by which alone we can claim any title to the blessing, and acceptance, and mercy of God.

S E C T. XII.

False Principles discovered in the Law of Nature.

BY these observations of the Apostle, we have the weight and authority of his arguments to animadvert upon the like attempt now made in these latter days by the schoolmasters of moral discipline, who mean to exalt their dissertations upon social and moral duties into the highest place of authority and instruction, under the gospel dispensation; and having the like design in view with the Judaizing Christians of the Apostle's age, it is their purpose to establish the Law of Nature as of original and primary obligation, antecedent to all revelation made to us of the Will of God by his word, which (if at all to be admitted by them) they contend must be given to amend, explain, and enforce the original Law of Nature; to which effect they have abundantly expressed themselves in their writings and discourses.

But what they assume as a self-evident proposition, that the Law of Nature is of original and primary obligation, we are warranted to deny, and do thereby overturn the foundation of their confident arguments.

For the Law of Reason, or of Nature, such as they would produce from their own understandings, did not take place until human nature was corrupted, and had fallen from its original perfection, by departing from FAITH in the word of God, through disobedience to his command; and by the act of disobedience, and the apostacy of our first parents, the assistance and communication of the Holy Spirit being withdrawn from them, the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by their senses became the leading principle of their lives.

But as God had created man in his own image, and breathed into him the breath of life, he was mercifully pleased to find out a way for his recovery from this
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lost condition, and by passing sentence of condemnation upon the tempter, who seduced him, he graciously vouchsafed to promise to the first transgressors a deliverance from death, which was the sentence of punishment due to their offence.

From hence we see, that according to the true history of mankind, when they fell from Faith in God's word, they became subject to the Law of Nature, or of Works, by which they could not live, as by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified in his sight; and therefore every man, by the sentence of that law, enacted by divine authority, was subject unto death; and all collective bodies of men, united in societies established by that law, were subject also to a political death, or dissolution in the forms of their government, which have been broken *in pieces like a potter's vessel*.

The impostures which chiefly uphold the false reasonings that are now offered in support of the Law of Nature, may be easily pointed out from what has been observed.

1. The teachers of that law, without acknowledging that they derive it from holy scripture, do assume the knowledge or name of the true God, to which, independently of divine revelation, they have no title, but by sacrilege; for the knowledge of the true God was lost among the heathen nations, who were all idolaters before the call of Abraham, as they all continued to be afterwards, who were separated from the commonwealth of Israel.

As to that spurious composition, which pretends to exhibit a demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, as if REASON could lead us to that knowledge, it escaped the examination of advocates for Christianity, under the false appearance of giving support to true religion and virtue, according to the pretence of its industrious author: whereas, on strict enquiry, we find it to be a forgery of very subtil and insidious craftiness, which afforded a sort of charter for establishment

of the society of Deists, to maintain their combat against the truth of revelation.

Again, The fall of man from his original state of happiness and purity, which is discovered to us by revelation, is not acknowledged by the teachers of the Law of Nature; and by denying or disowning this truth, they find much advantage to their cause, in maintaining the excellency and dignity of human nature, thereby inferring a self-sufficiency of reason and understanding to discover all natural and moral fitnesses and relations, which are necessary to direct our behaviour towards God and man.

To support this part of their imposture, they have powerful assistances from the pride, and the passions, and prejudices of human nature, by its original corruption too much disposed, in the very best men, to exalt and over-rate themselves upon those differences or distinctions among us, which concern our outward circumstances and abilities for action in this present life.

Farther, By denying and disbelieving the fall of man, the Deists remove the whole transaction relating to it; by which means the evil spirit, who is styled in scripture *the god of this world*, lies concealed in his actions and approaches; for of him and his purposes there is no acknowledgment made in the Law or Religion of Nature, as it is taught under the light of the gospel; so that when his existence is denied by wicked men, opposing and withstanding the word of God thro' the snares of the devil, by saying he is NOT as he is discovered and described by it, they give a NEGATIVE PROOF that he is, by a LYE, which is a demonstration of his own invention, suitable to his nature, and favourable to his designs.

Again, That the teachers of the Law of Nature may give an account of those disorders in the world, which are derived from the evil principle of action, introduced by our original apostacy from God; they impute those moral evils or distempers which are among

us, to the ABUSE of our LIBERTY, falsely supposing that we still continue FREE, after we had lost our liberty by sin. And on this presumption these schoolmasters teach us how to make use of our liberty by doing good works, but have no consideration at all how we may be free to do them. They give us the outward garb and drapery of true religion, which they craftily appropriate to their own invention; but for the spirit of religion, to lead and to preserve us in the truth, they refer us to our own industry to acquire it, as they suppose every man to have such command of himself, by the due use of his liberty, that he may be meek, and humble, and patient, and charitable, when they have convinced him, by their moral prescriptions, that he OUGHT to be so, according to the real character and dignity of his nature.

The word of God is express and clear in its discoveries throughout the whole tenor of the gospel, to undeceive us, and to prevent those delusions from passing upon us, which arise from such high conceits of our own self-sufficiency, suggested to us through the subtil artifice of the enemy.

Particularly, that we may come to the due apprehension of our own wretched condition, and what pains it must cost us in struggling for our liberty, and also how destitute we are of any strength from within ourselves to be able to attain unto it; the Apostle St. Paul has described this inward conflict by his own experience; and by his declaration of what he felt in this spiritual contest, we learn what every man must feel, before he comes to enjoy that liberty, which he is falsely supposed to have by nature, but which is only the gift of grace through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The whole chapter, which is the 7th of his Epistle to the Romans, is chiefly directed to this purpose; so that the Jew or the Christian, who does consider himself as a free agent by nature, is called upon to give attention to what the Apostle has described, and to bear

bear witness, by his own experience, to the truth of it.

Another instance of imposture, which is taken into all arguments for the support of the Law of Nature, lies concealed in the terms of man being a rational or reasonable creature; from whence it comes to be supposed, that his reason does furnish him with LIGHT, or that he is or may be directed by the LIGHT of NATURE, to do that which is decent, or suitable to his condition in all circumstances and relations, and that he OUGHT, in all his actions, to be governed by REASON, as the distinguishing character and privilege of his nature, above all other creatures of the earth.

As to what concerns this present world, the Reason of mankind may be appealed to as a principle to guide us in such manner, as will make us find approbation and acceptance with one another. But from hence we cannot pass to another conclusion, which we are much inclined to derive from our Reason also, that because it is sufficient, as WE THINK, to point out how we should behave towards one another, to make us happy and agreeable, according to our own taste in the intercourses of society, it must therefore follow, that our Reason is sufficient to lead us in the discovery of our whole duty towards God and towards man.

The fallacy of appealing to REASON as a principle of action, by which we may be justified in the sight of God, is now apparent from what has been observed; for the knowledge of good and evil by our senses, is the principle upon which our reason does proceed, independently of divine revelation, to direct all our actions to attain happiness in this world; so that the LAW of NATURE or of REASON is formed upon that principle which was introduced by the transgression of God's command; and therefore before we can be accepted in our duty to God, we must resign that principle of action which came in by disobedience to him; that is, we must forsake the paths in which our own Reason would conduct us to our happiness, and seek for it by
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taking the WORD of GOD for the principle of our lives, that we may exercise our reason upon it, trusting in his wisdom and goodness, to lead us unto happiness, by the renewal and perfection of our nature, which can only be effected in his way of salvation, by the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to us through the merits of our blessed Redeemer.

In this change of the principle of corrupted nature, from a carnal and sensual life, guided by the knowledge of good and evil, unto the principle of a spiritual life, derived from believing in God and in his holy word, our regeneration, or NEW BIRTH, does consist; that is, *If any man be in Christ, he is a NEW CREATURE*; for we are said in scripture to be born again to a new life, when we are led by the spirit of God, through the merits of our Redeemer, to *walk by Faith, and not by Sight*.

From this distinct view of the two principles of action, which are derived to us by Faith and Sight, we have a clear discovery of all attempts that can be made by our spiritual adversary to compass his design of separating and withdrawing us from our obedience unto God; for this end is accomplished according to the purpose of the enemy of our souls, when he succeeds by his instruments or temptations, in prevailing with us to depart from FAITH in the word of God, and betake ourselves to some rule of life derived from our own reason, or from the reason of other men, as independent of divine revelation.

The numberless attempts that have been made for this end, are discernible not only in treatises written against revealed religion, or in support of MORALITY, inculcated according to the Law of Nature; but the adversary of truth is more subtil in his devices to betray the understandings of men to embrace his lies by artful insinuations, which convey the poison of infidelity, with all the most refined methods of engaging address and instruction; to which purpose the endowments of human wit and learning have been most industriously

dustriously abused in numberless compositions, to pervert and amuse our understandings, to inflame the passions, and to raise our imaginations, through the allurements of sensual objects, to make out such schemes for our own happiness at present, as may intercept the view and pursuit of that happiness, to which we are called by the grace and mercy of God.

To conclude these observations, which have been made to shew those impostures which are maintained and concealed under the shadow of the Law of Nature, we may be able, in consequence of this discovery, to point out the errors in the forms of all false religions, which do all of them correspond with the Law of Nature: for all the various inventions of the enemy of truth, whether they are idolatrous, heretical, or superstitious, do conspire in one main design to lead away the human mind or understanding from giving due attention to the word of divine truth, and to set up in its place, the words, or examples, or traditions, or commandments of men, to take from them our rule or direction in life: upon which account we have sufficient warning by divine authority, to beware of appeals that are made to REASON OR COMMON SENSE; and instead of complying with such arguments as are derived from our own experience, to determine our judgments in matters of FAITH, respecting our religious concerns, we are called upon to watch diligently against the crafty purposes of our spiritual adversary, who is then sure of compassing his malicious designs against our salvation, when we are betrayed, by his delusions, to be confident in the powers of our own minds, to direct and preserve us in the truth.

But although we are warranted to deny, that the principles of TRUE RELIGION can be discovered by human reason, unassisted by divine revelation; yet we must beware of a deceitful and dangerous prejudice, which may arise in our minds, by hearing, as it has been commonly said, that divine truths are above, or beyond, or contrary to our reason; which assertion we
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are not to admit, but with due caution and advertency to the extent and meaning of it.

For example ; we cannot prove or demonstrate the first proposition of holy scripture, that *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* ; yet this truth, when revealed to the human understanding, is most readily embraced and assented to, and by its admittance does afford materials for our reason to be exercised upon it, in the discovery of that duty we owe to God our Creator.

Again, If this principle of divine knowledge is taken, as it is by the moralizing or deistical writers, to stand as the foundation of all their reasonings, presuming that it is or might be discovered or demonstrated from *the things which are seen*, the fallacy of which assumption has been abundantly confuted ; yet if this point could be granted to them, and that they had a right to propose it as the leading principle of their philosophy, that there is but ONE GOD, who made all things ; with this concession they can make out no other rule of action, but the Law of Nature, under the sanction of temporal rewards and punishments, according to our knowledge of good and evil in this life.

The great mystery of our recovery and redemption from sin and death, and the methods by which our salvation was accomplished by the Son of God, are secret things, utterly unsearchable by human reason, and are therefore called MYSTERIES ; not because they cannot be understood and apprehended by our reason, when they are told and declared to us, but because these fundamental truths of the gospel cannot be made known to the human mind, but by revelation or instruction conveyed to us by divine authority, which introduced the use of the term MYSTERY, as being appropriated among the heathens to that signification of the word in their religion of idolatry, from which they were to be converted by the preachers of the gospel.

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By this observation we may agree to what has been said by a false advocate for truth, that Christianity is not MYSTERIOUS ; and especially as many persons, who do not wish to be troubled about it, are fain to suppose, that it does contain such mysteries and difficulties as are not to be reconciled to their understandings.

It is the interest of the enemy of truth, to put every offence in our way that may be apt to make us stumble, and to betray us from it ; but it is the duty of every man who hears the word of God, to give his earnest attention to it ; and if he does hear it faithfully, with a sincere purpose to observe it, he has assurance, by divine authority, that his knowledge of sacred truth will be improved according to his advances in doing the will of God.

The great stumbling-block of offence both to the Jews and the Gentiles, is that difficulty we must get over in denying ourselves before we can follow Christ ; for Christ crucified was *unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks*, who were the wisest and most learned heathens of that time, *foolishness* ; because both the Jews and the Greeks did abide by that wisdom, which set up the Law of Nature in the highest place, ; and they would not believe that it could be reversed, to give place to another law, requiring our chief attention to the-interests of a future state. This law, both the Jews and the Greeks, and all other persons whatsoever, who will walk according to the dictates of their own natural reason, will certainly reject, as by it they cannot be taught to forsake their own imaginations, and to set aside the wisdom of this world, and all its promises to make us happy in the comforts and joys of this life ; whereas, by the gospel of Christ, we are called upon to renounce this sort of wisdom, that we may derive the principles, or chief motives of our actions, from his doctrine and example, by which every Christian must learn with St. Paul to glory in no other wisdom *but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom*
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(as he speaks of himself) *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* That is, the world has no allurements to prevail with a sincere believer, as he was, to desert from following his Master to his heavenly kingdom, through all the troubles and perplexities he may meet with in this transitory life; as all the desires and affections of his faithful servants are subdued to the obedience of his holy Will, thereby denying themselves, and renouncing their own wills of walking according to the wisdom and policies of this world.

Hence it is, that before the Jews can be converted to the Christian Faith, they must acknowledge the insufficiency of the Law of Nature, which was confirmed to them by divine authority, and consider it only as an imperfect dispensation of divine wisdom to prepare and lead them unto a more perfect discovery of the Will of God, which was revealed in due time, or, according to the scripture expression, *in the fullness of time*, after a sufficient trial had been made of the weakness and unprofitableness of the LAW of NATURE, or of the covenant of works of the Mosaical dispensation, which law is on this account called by the Apostle, *our school-master to bring us unto Christ*. Therefore, to accomplish this end, of bringing the Jews unto Christ, no arguments, derived from their own wisdom or experience, will produce that effect, which is declared in the strongest terms, and in the highest instance that could be given of miraculous and Almighty power in the divine Author of our religion, when he foretold of the Jewish nation, *that if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*. Or, in other words, if they do not attend to what Moses and the Prophets have said, concerning the humiliation and sufferings of their Messiah, and so are led by their testimony *to look on him whom they pierced*, (John xix. 37. from Zechariah xii. 10.) as sent to redeem them from sin and death, from which they could not be redeemed by the law of Moses; they will not be persuaded by any arguments, in reasoning by their
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own wisdom, to believe in Christ, although they had the miracle of his resurrection from the dead before their eyes, to convince them of the divine authority of his mission.

But whensoever it may please God to awaken their understandings, to hear Moses and the Prophets, with due attention to the great ends for which their Messiah was sent into the world, they will then be persuaded, by the applications and arguments drawn in the New Testament from the prophetic writings, to believe with us in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Deliverer, and Saviour of Mankind.

This belief does imply, that the LAW of NATURE, in the OLD COVENANT given by Moses, was FULFILLED by the perfect obedience of the MESSIAH to it, and was abrogated in its SANCTION, derived from the corrupt PRINCIPLE of the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by our senses, being abolished and destroyed by the life, and sufferings, and death of the MESSIAH, our holy REDEEMER; and that LIFE, and IMMORTALITY consequent upon it, were brought to light in the NEW COVENANT of the GOSPEL revelation, witnessed and confirmed by the RESURRECTION of the MESSIAH JESUS CHRIST, the LORD and SAVIOUR of all mankind, who derive from him support and comfort, to bear them up under all the troubles of this life, and have full assurance of future happiness by following his steps, when they live or WALK *by FAITH, and not by SIGHT.*

S E C T. XIII.

The LIFE and SUFFERINGS of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Foretold by the Prophets, and Witnessed by the Evangelists.

WE have seen, by due attention given to the providential history of mankind, delivered to us in the sacred writings, from what cause our misery, in this uncertain troubled state, has originally proceeded; that it was occasioned by the entrance of sin and death into the world, through the disobedience of the first man, who was seduced by the temptation and policies of the devil; and that this original corruption is propagated through the whole race of mankind, who are born in sin, under the influence of the evil principle of action which he introduced, and are naturally disposed to be led and governed by it, in pursuit of happiness by the gratifications of their appetites and passions in this present life.

The great object of the providential government of mankind, in manifesting the mercy of God, to recover them from the misery of their fallen state, is to destroy the works of the devil, and to rescue the souls of men from the power of his policy and delusion; that is, to abolish that evil principle of action to which they became subject through the address of the evil spirit, when he prevailed by his temptation to cut off the communications of divine knowledge and assistance from our first parents, who fell from their state of innocence, and happiness, and liberty, by disobeying the word of God, and listening to the word of the deceiver; and so were betrayed into the corrupt principle of life, the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by their senses, to take that knowledge, acquired by their own experience, to reason upon it instead of the word of God, and make it the ruling principle of their lives.

The great work of our redemption, which was assured to us by the first PROMISE of God made in favour of fallen man, begins with the preparatory dispensation of divine wisdom in the law given to the nation of Israel, which for the weakness and unprofitableness of it to reform our corrupted nature, was in due time abolished and set aside; so that the abrogating of that law, which is the LAW of NATURE, leads on to the manifestation of the free grace and mercy of God in the gospel of salvation, vouchsafed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ: *To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

It may be useful to our present purpose, that we should observe the resemblance which appears between the Jewish nation, and the Gentiles converted to Christianity, in regard to the corruptions of the faith which came in under the law, and under the gospel.

The age of the patriarchs and of the prophets in the Jewish church, while it continued pure from the infection of their idolatrous neighbours, may be taken to correspond with the apostolic age in the Christian church, through that space of time which is comprised in the three first centuries of the Christian æra, before the great falling away or defection from the purity of the Christian faith, which began in the fourth century, by the spreading of the Arian heresy.

Again; The corrupt state of the Jewish church, which began in the latter days of the reign of Solomon, and continued throughout the reigns of the Kings of Judah unto the time of the Babylonish captivity; in which time the Kings of Judah did generally conspire with the bulk of the people to corrupt the worship of God, and to join it with idolatrous customs and inventions
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of the heathens, whose gods they worshipped, together with the God of Israel, and profaned his temple by the service of them; this age of the Jewish church may be taken to correspond with the Christian church, infected by the Sabellian and Arian, and other heresies, contending for the mastery over the Christian faith; and thereby made way for the blasphemous infallibility of the Romish church to establish a spiritual idolatry, superadded to the gross imagery and idolatry of heathen worship restored by her.

Lastly, The state of the Jewish church in the remnant which returned to Judea from the Babylonish captivity, when it continued free from idolatry, until the final dissolution and dispersion of that people by the destruction of their temple and city, may be justly deemed to correspond to the remnant of the Christian church returned to the true faith, and reformed from the idolatry and superstitions of the Romish church. For as the Jews, after that captivity, were preserved from relapsing into idolatry by the law and the prophets being read among them every sabbath-day; so also in the reformed Christian church, the members of it are preserved from the corruptions of popery by the law and the prophets, and the gospel being read among them in their churches on every Sunday: but as it was among the Jews, so is it also among the Christians, that infidelity has prevailed in place of idolatry; for although they have not served strange gods, yet they have lived, and do live for the greater part of them, without serving God in the manner he has commanded, in spirit and in truth, according to the law of the gospel of Christ. Instead of observing that law which requires inward purity and holiness, as the service acceptable to God, and recommends all external acts of our worship to him, the artifices and attempts of the enemies of true religion are incessant and unwearied to set it aside, and to bring Christians back again to the Jewish church, built upon the Law of Nature, which they mean to restore in the pursuit of their

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purposes for this world, and in defiance of his authority who fulfilled the law, and thereby delivered his servants and faithful followers from the yoke and bondage of the law of Moses; that is, of the Law of Nature.

While these attempts are manifestly carried on by false prophets, who mean to pass for members of the Christian church, no wonder that a corresponding degeneracy and corruption of manners should prevail among us, as did among the Jews, before the utter destruction and dispersion of that nation. Upon this account also there is no marvel, that when both the doctrines and examples of the unfaithful members of the Christian church do so much agree to the corrupted Jewish church in the last ages of it, we should not yet be able to prevail with the Jews to open their eyes, and to look into that wonderful fabrick of the reformed established church in these kingdoms, which is truly *built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*

But to carry on this comparison between the Jewish and Christian churches yet farther; as in the corrupted Jewish church, when our Lord himself appeared among them, he found faithful followers to be witnesses of his life and of his sufferings, of his death and resurrection and ascension into heaven, who were endued by him with constancy and firmness of mind, to propagate his doctrine and the true faith in his name, in defiance of the malice of their enemies; so is it also that, by the blessing and mercy of God to his church, many faithful witnesses have appeared, and do still appear in the reformed church established among us, to prelerve the purity of the christian faith, by their discourses and their writings in support of it, according to the instruction of his holy word.

As those faithful witnesses, who were chosen by our Lord himself when he conversed upon earth, who took them from among his own people to be his apostles to their brethren of the Jewish nation, did always argue,

as our Lord himself did, to convince them of their error of persisting in infidelity, by shewing, as he told them, *that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me; and thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*; so it is that the very same path which has been marked out for us by our Lord and his Apostles, must be pursued in all our addressses made to the Jewish nation, for inviting them to embrace the truth of Christ's religion; for if their attention is not awakened to hear *Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*; that is, no other arguments that can be offered, not even miracles, will have that effect to remove their obstinacy.

Therefore to pursue this purpose of inviting the Jews into the Christian church, it is first necessary, that we who offer ourselves as guides to the blind, may convince them that we see and walk according to the light of God's holy word, by a conformity of our actions to the sacred rules of our duty, as it is laid before us in the gospel of Christ; and then only we may justly lay in our claim to be attended to by the nation of Israel, when we have proved that we are the sons of Israel in the true faith of a crucified Saviour; and as true believers in the merits of the death and sufferings of our holy Redeemer, we may obtain from them also that important acknowledgment and confession of their own blindness and obstinacy in unbelief, which we know, by God's mercy, will be made in due time by them, according to the gracious promise of our Lord himself by the mouth of his prophet.

Zech. xii. 10. I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me as their Saviour, whom they have pierced as their enemy; and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son,

and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.

In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon; when the Jews shall return and be restored, through divine interposition, to the possession of their own land.

As their MOURNING is preparatory to their reconciliation, and must find acceptance for them upon their returning to the true faith in a crucified Saviour; the way is clearly marked out to shew them for this purpose, that if they hear Moses and the prophets, they will find the life and sufferings, the death and resurrection and ascension of the Messiah foretold by them, as these great events came to pass which are witnessed and attested by the apostles and evangelists, the followers of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

But the great difficulty we have to get over, is to gain the ATTENTION of the Jewish people, that they may be patient in comparing the writings of the apostles and evangelists with the writings of Moses and the prophets; for the gospel-history of the life, and sufferings, and discourses of our Saviour, is a commentary, by divine appointment conveyed to us, explaining, illustrating, and confirming what was said of him in the law and in the prophets, by shewing in his person the accomplishment of God's promises *to finish the TRANSGRESSION, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to SEAL UP the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.* All these great events were introduced and fulfilled ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, by the humiliation and sufferings of the Messiah; yet on this account it was, when he came unto his own people, his own people received him not, but rejected him; and therefore unto this day the bulk of the Jewish nation have continued in their infidelity, because they have not attended to Moses and the Prophets, but have followed false teachers, leading them astray from
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divine truth, to look after a fictitious or an imaginary Saviour or Deliverer, according to the false hopes of worldly advantages which they chiefly expect and wait for by him.

The ministers of the established church in these kingdoms have in this respect an easy task to be prepared with those arguments which are only to be relied upon for the conversion of that people; for with such they are abundantly furnished by the most admirable composition of the BOOK of COMMON PRAYER, appointed for the use of that church, in which those lessons and psalms are occasionally applied, which contain the evidences of the Christian faith in the sufferings and death, and in the resurrection and ascension, of our blessed Lord.

But in order to shew a few of the corresponding testimonies of the prophets with the evangelists and apostles, concerning the great articles of our faith relating to the sufferings and satisfaction made for our sins by our holy Redeemer, we may begin our observations upon the first promise of the Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, which promise was given to support our first parents, with hope of a deliverance to them and their posterity from the power of the serpent, who had betrayed them into sin, and death the consequence of it. For in this promise, which is the foundation of our faith in all other promises of God, the sufferings of the promised seed are foretold in the sentence pronounced upon the serpent; for so God said to him, of the seed of the woman, *it shall bruise thy head*, that spiritual power which is in thee to do evil, *and thou*, by means of thy power of doing evil, *shalt bruise his heel*, that mortal part of him by which he is joined or allied to the earth, and to his brethren who are of the dust of it.

The temptation of Abraham, the great ancestor of the Jewish nation, when he was called upon and commanded by God to sacrifice his only son in the land of Moriah, upon one of the mountains where the

temple was afterwards built, is a transaction of very remarkable account in the prophetic history : for it denotes, in the clearest terms, the strength of Abraham's faith, by which he found acceptance with God, and so was approved to become the father of the faithful, by that son who was obedient unto death in regard to the commandment of God ; and, in this respect, he foreshewed the sacrifice of the only Son of God the Messiah, who suffered in due time upon that mountain where Isaac was bound and delivered up to the Will of God by the faith of Abraham.

This prophetic designation of the Messiah, and of his sufferings, in that place where he was to be offered a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, was not then understood by Abraham any more than it has been since by the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation, who have refused to acknowledge their suffering Messiah ; but what was then obscure, and concealed from Abraham, was plainly revealed to them among whom our Lord did suffer ; yet they would not understand or receive the interpretation of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, although they were clearly exhibited, and laid before their eyes in his life and sufferings, when he came upon earth.

In this instance they departed from the example of Abraham their faithful ancestor ; for he did not attend to the way of arguing according to our own experience, that if he should sacrifice his son, how could it be, that by that son multitudes of children should descend from him ? or how could all the families of the earth be blessed in him, according to God's promise to Abraham concerning Isaac, when he said, *I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him ; my covenant will I establish with Isaac ?*

These declarations made to Abraham did lead him into those circumstances, which, in the mind of a worldly man, reasoning by his own knowledge and experience, would have tempted him to disobey the command of
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God, and to have ventured presumptuously to save the life of Isaac.

So that when *God did tempt Abraham*, as we are told in the sacred text, the great trial of his faith arose from those circumstances, complicated with the tenderness of a father towards his only son; yet he prevailed over this temptation, as the apostle has expressed it, *By faith Abraham, when he was tempted, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.* Here we see Abraham *against hope believed in hope*; that is, he believed that God would most certainly accomplish what he had promised to him, although the sacrificing of his son was an undeniable argument against hope of such blessings as he expected by him, according to our experience in human affairs.

By comparing this example of faithful Abraham with the behaviour of his children after the flesh, who rejected their Messiah, we perceive evidently how they forfeited their title of being Abraham's children in the true faith; for they reasoned after the manner of men, in expectation of worldly greatness in temporal power and dominion to be conferred on their nation, when the deliverer would appear; and therefore they would not attend to the appeal made by our Lord to the holy writings, testifying of him and his sufferings; because they would reason after their own way, perversely to limit the purpose of God in sending his Son into the world, that he might only give deliverance to the nation of the Jews, and make them superior in worldly dominion to all other nations of the earth.

They would not consider the Messiah as the promised seed, to bruise the head of the serpent, and so to put an end to his spiritual tyranny upon earth, by destroying sin and death, together with that evil principle of action which he had introduced; but their reasonings were all founded upon their own prejudices in favour
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of worldly advantages and glories, which they did vainly expect when the Messiah would appear among them.

So the faith of Abraham, by which he rejected the deceitful reasonings of human knowledge and experience, standing in opposition to the word of God, did derive to him the great honour of being approved in the sight of God, to become the Father of the Faithful by his son Isaac, the representative of our Lord the Messiah. Whereas the unbelief of the Jewish nation, in rejecting the prophetic word of God, through their reasonings according to their own experience and conclusions in worldly affairs, led them to reject and to crucify their Messiah, when he appeared in his state of humiliation upon earth ; and their guilt of taking his blood upon themselves and their children, did occasion those dreadful calamities to that nation, which ended in the destruction of their temple and of their city ; and this guilt is still witnessed by the contempt and dispersion of that people among all other nations of the world.

Hence we observe, that the long-contested arguments which have been offered to convince the Jews of the appearance of their Messiah in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, do all turn upon this point, that so long as they will not consent to forego their prejudices in favour of that false principle of reasoning according to the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by their senses, and renounce it as a deceitful guide to their happiness, they will not believe in their Messiah, but will abide by the old LAW of NATURE, or of WORKS, looking after the temporal promises made to them who lived under it, which have been long since forfeited ; but if they will give up the argument from their own experience, and fix their attention only to the word of God, speaking by Moses and the prophets, they will believe in their suffering Messiah, as he hath said unto them, *They shall look on me whom they have PIERCED.*

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Then they will perceive, that much greater honour, and more glorious privileges are intended for them, when they come into the Christian church, believing in a crucified Saviour, than what they had experienced, who have lived by the LAW given by Moses, under the temporal government of David or Solomon.

When that happy time shall arrive, which will bring the body of the Jewish nation to mourn for their offences in rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, their confession cannot be made more suitably, than in those terms of remorse and compunction, by which their patriarchs expressed their guilt in the cruelty they had shewn to their brother Joseph, when they were standing in distress before him: *And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not bear, therefore is this distress come upon us.*

The principal circumstances of the history of Joseph are prophetic representations of the life, and sufferings, and exaltation of the Messiah, and of the future reconciliation of his brethren to him. So it is to be noted, that the envy of Joseph's brethren moved them to conspire, and to sell him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, as our Lord in like manner was sold by his false Apostle to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver; *A goodly price (saith our Lord by his Prophet) that I was prized at of them. Zech. xi. 13.*

Thus likewise it is witnessed by the Evangelist, concerning Pilate, the Roman Governor, that he pleaded with the Jews to release our Lord; *for he knew, that for envy they had delivered him to be crucified.*

The discovery of Joseph to his brethren, when they thought they had destroyed him by their wicked conspiracy against him; the support he afforded them in Egypt, by which the future greatness of that family was insured to become a mighty nation; and, lastly, their return out of Egypt, from under the oppression of the tyrant of it, to take possession of their inheritance in the land of Canaan;

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All these incidents are so many prophetic designations of the great importance of that discovery and reconciliation which will be made between our Lord and his brethren, according to the flesh, when they come also to acknowledge him their Messiah in a crucified Saviour, now exalted in triumph to the right hand of God, ready to give deliverance to them from all their enemies spiritual and temporal.

Thus again, by the words of Joseph, spoken to his brethren to comfort them, the mercy of our gracious Lord is expressed also towards his brethren returning to him :

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither ; for God did send me before you to preserve life. As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

The prophecy of Jacob on his death-bed, in his blessing pronounced upon Judah, points out his tribe in which the promised seed, the Messiah, the Shiloh, the meek or the peaceful one, would appear ; and so the same instruction concerning a suffering and conquering Saviour, is delivered by Jacob in strong and lively images.

These images are clearly explained by the Prophet Isaiah and the Evangelists, compared in their testimony concerning the triumphant entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, sitting upon a colt the foal of an ass, and *binding his foal unto the vine, and his asses colt unto the choice vine ; he washed his garments in wine, and his cloaths in the blood of grapes. His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.* Which words have been already considered and applied. See also Zechariah ix. 9, 10, 11.

The next remarkable evidence to be cited in prophetic history, foreshewing the humiliation of the Messiah, appears in the words of Moses, Deut. xviii. 15. *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thy brethren like unto me ; unto him shall ye hearken.* Which correspond to the words of Jacob's blessing

blessing concerning the obligation of the Jewish law given by Moses, which would not cease in the tribe of Judah, as *the sceptre* (the rod or ensign of authority to inflict punishment according to the sanction of the Jewish law) *shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver* (a scribe, or law-interpreter) *from between his feet*, of his own children, *until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the GATHERING of the PEOPLE be.* Or more strictly, according to the import of the original word, explained by Proverbs xxx. 17. the obedience or attention of the PEOPLE of God shall be given or directed to him; that is, to receive a new law at his mouth.

Here it is to be noted, that we find this circumstance recorded in the gospel, which does peculiarly point out the accomplishment of this prophecy of Jacob at the death of the Messiah; for when the Jews asked judgment of Pilate to put him to death, Pilate referred them to the sentence which was due by their law to the offences he might be guilty of; upon which the Jews answered, that according to their law he was guilty of death; yet, under the government of the Romans, it was not lawful to put any man to death without leave from their tribunal. Thus, by their own confession, the rod or sceptre, the ensign of regal or executive power, was departed from them; and so also the obligation or sanction of their law ceased by the death of the Messiah, who abolished it by his suffering. And as the obligation and sanction of it were taken away, the Scribes, or law-interpreters, were no longer of use to the PEOPLE OF GOD, with whom a NEW COVENANT was established according to the spiritual law of his gospel.

Herein the likeness between our Lord and Moses is discerned, with respect to the principal circumstance of their public characters, as law-givers; and the resemblance yet farther appears in their personal characters, relatively to the name Shiloh, the meek, the lowly, or peaceful one, as the Messiah is called by Jacob.

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It is said in the sacred writings of Moses, Numb. xii. 3. *Now the man Moses was very MEEK, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth*; and the Evangelist bears witness to the words of our Lord, inviting the people which were gathered unto him, to take his instruction, and to submit to the laws of his kingdom, because he was the Shiloh; or, as it is in his own words, Matth. xi. 29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am MEEK, and lowly in heart.* And again, Matth. xxi. 5. we find an appeal to the prophecy of Jacob, as it is also repeated in the words of Zechariah, ix. 9. *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee MEEK and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*

As this circumstance of the meekness of the Messiah gave occasion to Jacob's prophetic appellation of him by the name SHILOH, the meek, peaceful, and humble one, so we find, by the succeeding prophets, he is spoken of and marked out chiefly by the same most peculiar circumstance of his character, of which many instances occur, besides the words of Moses already cited, particularly from Isaiah, the evangelical Prophet, whose testimony foreshews the meek behaviour of our Lord, as clearly as his Apostles and Evangelists have related it, who were witnesses of his humiliation, and of his sufferings.

Isaiah, xlii. 1. *Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he shall have set judgment in the earth; and the ISLES shall wait for his LAW.* A circumstance which deserves to be noted particularly by us, who are the inhabitants of them.

In the same chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah, there is an appeal to the Jewish nation, with an earnest call
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from the Lord by his Prophet, to awaken their attention, by upbraiding them with their stupid insensibility to the signal attestations given by his servant, in the execution of his commission when he appeared among them ; *Hear, ye deaf ; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.* Be persuaded, be intreated, ye deaf, and ye blind, to make use of your ears, and of your eyes, that ye may see the wonders that are before you. *Who is blind, but my servant ? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent ? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant ? Seeing many things, but thou observest not ; opening the ears, but he heareth not.* The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake ; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. To which the foregoing words of the Prophet correspond, as we find them in the 11th chapter.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.

And he shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord : and he shall not judge after the SIGHT of his eyes, neither reprove after the HEARING of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Herein the wonderful and most amazing submission, the patience, and meekness, and humility of our blessed Lord did appear ; that in order to destroy the force of the EVIL PRINCIPLE of action, and to rescue us from it, and from the penalty of the LAW of NATURE, to which we became subject by it, he endured *such contradiction of sinners against himself*, with their cruel mockings and revilings, and at length yielded himself to the most ignominious and painful death, to be scourged and crucified.

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He that afforded the clearest evidence of his Almighty power, and of his mercy, giving sight to the blind, and opening the ears of the deaf; and he that was perfect, upright, and innocent, the Lord's servant, who had therefore the best title to threaten and execute immediate vengeance upon his enemies; yet he was blind and deaf to their undeserved injuries, and reproaches, and grievous provocations. So truly did he attain to the character of the Meek or the Peaceful One, given in the prophetic designation of him by Jacob in the name SHILOH, and did thereby also accomplish what the Prophet had said of him, *He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the bearing of his ears.*

Here is the miracle of his love and of his meekness, that although all power in heaven and in earth was in his hands, to have taken vengeance instantly of those wicked men who sought after his innocent life, and at length persecuted him to death; yet for our sakes he submitted to that death, to shew us the way also to forsake that evil principle of the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL by our senses, that we may walk by FAITH in God's word, and not by SIGHT.

Therefore his example stands forth as the pattern of the most exalted love, of the most astonishing MEENESS, and patience, and resignation, and bears out that challenge of the Lord by his Prophet viewing him under the severest trials of his humiliation, and of his sufferings, *Who is blind, but my servant, or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he beareth not. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, being found blameless, according to the law which he fulfilled; and therefore he will magnify the law, and make it honourable, as he himself said, as reported by the Evangelist, One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled; and so it was magnified and made*

made honourable by his submission in perfect obedience to it.

But notwithstanding these attestations given of his divine authority and commission, which were fore-shewed by the Prophets, his brethren, the bulk or body of the Jewish nation, would not believe in him; and thus the Prophet describes the consequences of their infidelity : *But this is a people robbed and spoiled of their antient privileges ; they are all of them snared in holes, like those contemptible animals which are taken in attempting to hide themselves, by digging deep into the earth for their security ; and they are hid in prison houses, being as unable to act with freedom, as if they were bound fast in prisons. They are for a prey to other nations of the earth, who make use of their services arbitrarily, and none delivereth ; there is no deliverer, no helper to be found among them ; for a spoil, and none saith restore ; none of them dare threaten a word to their oppressors. Who among you will give ear to this ? who will hearken and bear for the time to come ? Is there any person to be found among you, that will attend to this admonition, that he may understand for your relief in the time to come ? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers ? If this question be now asked among you, is none of you so well instructed ? will none of you answer it according to the truth ? saying, Did not the Lord, he, against whom we have sinned ? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his laws. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle ; and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not ; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart, that he might understand the true cause of his misery and captivity.*

But to proceed in comparing the testimonies of the prophets and the evangelists, we find the most exact correspondence in the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning the sufferings of the Messiah.

As the prophet Isaiah speaks in his name, L. 5. *The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, nei-*

ther turned away back ; I gave my back to the smilers, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair ; I hid not my face from shame and spitting ;

Accordingly we find at that time, when our Lord was betrayed by his faithless Apostle into the hands of the multitude, which laid hold upon him, he commanded that no resistance should be made on his side by any of his followers. He rebuked one of them, who had drawn a sword in his defence, by setting forth to him the reason of his submission to those sufferings which were coming upon him, and his resolution to abide them on that account, as appointed for him by the word of God : so he said to that Apostle who meant to defend him, that his falling into the hands of his enemies at that time, was not owing to the want of power to disperse or destroy them, for the host of heaven was ready to assist him at his desire, Matthew xxvi. 53. *Thinkest thou not that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ?*

By giving heed to the holy scriptures, his ear was opened to be attentive only to the word of God, to accomplish what was written of him. In consequence of this attention he disregarded the entreaties or attempts of men in his favour ; and also the solicitations or fears of his human nature, urging him to consult for his present safety, and turn away back from the fierceness and fury of that trial he was going to abide, in stedfast obedience to the will of God.

According to the testimony of the same Evangelist, Matth. xxvi. 67. it followed as the Prophet had declared, *Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him ; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee.*

The testimony of Isaiah is so full in the prophetic history of the sufferings of our Lord, and of the infidelity of the Jewish nation, rejecting their Messiah, as witnessed by the Evangelists, that these two circum-

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stances coincide with wonderful evidence to awaken the attention of that people ; for if they hearken to the Prophet, he describes our Lord, in his ministry and his offices, as he was SEEN by the Evangelists, who all agree minutely in the same report, and also in declaring the unsurmountable obstinacy of the Jewish nation, in rejecting the divine testimonies he gave of his commission.

Hence the prophetic and evangelical records of their blindness and deafness do afford, at this day, an amazing argument for their conversion, because they have been BLIND and DEAF.

Isaiah liii. *Who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?*

John xii. 37. *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him : That the saying of Esaias the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

To account for this obstinacy, we may attend to the following words of the Prophet ; *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, of a low and slender or contemptible appearance.*

The veil cast over his divine nature, by taking upon him the form of a servant, was such an offence to his own people, prejudiced in favour of worldly glory, which they expected in the person of their Messiah, that they did not believe in him when they saw him to be, as the Prophet told them he was, *a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.* Therefore, *he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, because he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him ; that is, he*

had not those external marks or ensigns of temporal power attending upon him, which engage the eyes and the attention of the multitude, in admiration of the great rulers of this world; and therefore he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, by resting the testimony of his divine commission upon the spiritual power of his miracles, to recommend the pure and spiritual instructions of his gospel. Thus their eyes were blinded, and their hearts hardened, on both these accounts; so they would not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted from their error, that *I should heal them*, by granting them a recovery from their sinful impenitent state.

Notwithstanding all the miracles he wrought in the midst of his own nation, and the appeals he made to Moses and the Prophets testifying of him, yet *he is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Then follows the great mystery of the satisfaction made to divine justice by the sufferings and death of the Messiah, which is declared by the Prophet, as the Evangelists have witnessed it from the words of our blessed Redeemer.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, as if he had been a transgressor; but he was wounded for OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, he was BRUISED for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

So that when our blessed Lord instituted the holy sacrament of his body and blood, at his last supper with his disciples before he suffered, Matth. xxvi. 26. *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the REMISSION OF SINS.*

To the same purpose St. Mark relates it. *As they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed and brake it, and gave it to them, and said, Take, eat : this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it; and he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for* MANY.

St. Luke also records the same transaction of our Lord. *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in MY BLOOD, which is SHED FOR YOU.*

Lastly, St. John bears witness to the same truth of the satisfaction made for our sins, by the death of Christ, in a long conference which our Lord held with the Jews to this purpose, that he might persuade them to believe in him, by opening their understandings, to conceive rightly of the benefits he came to confer upon them, and what deliverance it was that they should hope for by him.

Verily verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. Here is a wonderful declaration, setting forth the efficacy of a true faith in him, that they who believe in his word, and act according to it, shall have everlasting life.

Death is the last enemy we meet with in this world, and is sure to prevail against all men who are born into it; for howsoever we may struggle through the miseries of it for a few years, we must shortly be cast down into the dust: then as for any certainty of our recovery out of it, where is that to be found? The voice of nature is silent in this matter, and cannot shew any sure ground to build our hopes upon. Therefore the Psalmist gives a general summons upon this head, to awaken the attention of all mankind, to consider upon this point; and then he shews how unable they are of themselves, to give any answer of comfort to support the soul of a sinner, by an assurance of his de-

liverance from the guilt of his sins, and from death, the sure consequence of them.

Hear this, all ye people ; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world ; both low and high, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable ; I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about ?

What is the true foundation of those fears which seize upon a guilty soul, which is conscious of having violated the law of its nature, as every man has done, by numberless transgressions, throughout the course of his life ?

The answer is, That these fears are justly grounded upon the certainty of death, which every man is liable to ; and as a transgressor of the law, by which his conscience was bound, he can have no hope of a recovery from death, by any thing he can do for himself, or by what any other man like himself can do for him.

The men of the greatest temporal or worldly power, *they that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem their brother, nor give to God a ransom for him ; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.* The price of redeeming a soul from death is very high, far above their ability to discharge ; and therefore it ceaseth for ever ; they can never pay it, or bring it to pass, *that he should live for ever, and not see corruption ; for be seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person, and leave their wealth to others.* So that he who considers of his own case, according to the Law and the Light of Nature, cannot speak any comfort to himself against the fears of death, and the consequences of it, by any reflection upon what he can do for himself, or what any other person in this world can do for him.

It is true, however, that by the sinful imagination of a deceitful heart, men are carried on in their own
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vain fancies to act as if they were to live for ever in this world : and so the Psalmist proceeds to expose this false conceit, by severe and just reflections upon it ; for though they would be ashamed openly to confess it, yet *their inward thought is, that their HOUSES shall continue for ever, and their DWELLING-PLACES to all generations ; they call their lands after their own names.* Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not ; he is like the beasts that perish, as to any worldly or temporal benefit he enjoys. *This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave ; death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.*

Then the Psalmist declares his own trust and confidence in the mercy of God, to deliver him from DEATH by REDEMPTION ; that is, by a price or purchase paid for him. *But God will REDEEM my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.*

Isaiah liii. 6. *All we like sheep have gone astray, without understanding or considering our true interest. We have turned every one to his own way, following the device or purpose of our own hearts, misleading us to vain objects for our happiness, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, as our representative, according to the first promise given for the comfort of fallen man. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter ; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison, and from judgment : and who shall declare his generation ? Who can give an account of this wonderful mystery of his generation ? How far is it beyond the reach of human understanding to conceive rightly, and to speak worthily of this instance of divine love, that he who was the only begotten Son of God SHOULD SUFFER ? Who can declare his generation, under this amazing circumstance obscured by his ignominious death ? for he was cut off out of the land of the living ; for the transgression of my*

people was he stricken; and he made his grave with the wicked, suffering death in company with malefactors; but so soon as he died, his innocence began to plead for him, and respect was shewn to his dead body, which was placed, with the rich in his death, in a costly sepulchre, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth, yet it pleased God to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, he shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong: because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

This account must remain utterly unintelligible to the Jews, who are unbelievers in the death, and sufferings, and resurrection of their Messiah; so that these most important words of the prophet have no meaning at all in them, to give any comfort of instruction to that people.

This circumstance is taken notice of by Isaiah at large, in the 29th chapter of his prophecy, wherein he shews the miserable condition of the Jewish people, when they have no longer any understanding in the sacred scriptures of the prophets.

Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.

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And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

Wherefore saith the Lord, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

In consequence of that marvellous work wrought among them, when they rejected their Messiah in his humiliation and his sufferings, the writings of the prophets became a sealed book to their wise men, and the people being misled by them, and unlearned in the doctrine of a Redeemer, they were unable to understand the messages of the prophets, and of the seers, who were principally charged in their commissions to declare the glad tidings of salvation to all mankind by the merits of a Saviour, who died that he might triumph in his resurrection over our spiritual enemies.

Hence the prophet concludes on this head of his triumph, as it is before rehearsed;

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The foregoing quotation from Isaiah deserves yet farther our particular attention, to excite our admiration of the fulness of the divine prescience, in describing the condition of the Jewish nation in their obstinate state of infidelity. The images which the prophet makes use of are wonderfully adapted to awaken their understandings, and to rouse them up from that astonished stupified state which was coming upon them.

Stay yourselves and wonder; take admonition from the word of God by his prophet, pause upon it, and wonder

der at your own condition, and when ye are sensible of your deserted miserable estate, cry ye out and cry, bewail yourselves loudly, mourn, lament bitterly.

But in answer to this admonition, the prophet replies to it, *they are drunken*, they are stupified like drunken men, unwilling or unable to take heed unto wise counsel, their imaginations are inflamed with vain delusions, they are intoxicated *but not with wine*, they stagger as having no strength to support themselves, they are ready to fall down besotted, *but not with strong drink*; for the Lord hath poured upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered; he hath covered, by a veil drawn over it, his dispensation of mercy in the merits of a Redeemer, so that you have no understandings to apprehend the messages of the prophets, and the commands of the seers your rulers, which are chiefly directed to that end.

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; that is, forasmuch as this people are dissemblers in their hearts, which are set upon their own ways, while they pretend to give me praise with their lips, but instead of honouring my word, and setting my authority uppermost in their minds, they are taught by the authority or precept of men to have fear towards me according to the instruction of their wisdom and of their counsels; therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. In consequence of their departing from the word
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of God, and laying aside his authority to hearken to the precept of men, his book is become a sealed book to them, for they cannot understand the great design of his salvation declared by his servants the prophets, how clearly soever it has been revealed by them.

When our blessed Lord conversed upon earth among the Pharisees and Scribes of his time, he brought the foregoing words of Isaiah to reprove them for holding their TRADITIONS in opposition to the authority of the WRITTEN WORD of God; *When the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the TRADITION of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?*

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaias prophesied of you Hypocrites, as it is WRITTEN, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me: howbeit in vain do they honour me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of MEN.

The pretence which established the authority of their traditions, was to give outward honour to God by such ritual observances as did best suit the fancy of that people; and these traditions, being falsely supposed to have the sanction of divine authority for their original institution, were superadded to the precepts of their law.

The services required by these oral or traditional precepts did best agree with the natural corrupted disposition of men, who are most inclined to honour God with their lips, while they keep their hearts far from him in pursuit of their own purposes: so it came to pass that the Jews gave the uppermost place, the sovereign or supreme authority to their traditions, in neglect, or disregard, or in opposition to the authority of the WRITTEN word of God.

Here lay the source of their infidelity and apostasy, which was clearly pointed out to the Jews by our Lord himself, as he told them, *For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the TRADITION of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do,*
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And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, who so curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, If a man say unto his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free; and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your tradition. And many such like things do ye.

Instead of taking this warning from the words of their Messiah, to return to the authority of the word of God as it is WRITTEN, the learned men of the Jewish nation, since that time, have set the authority of it aside, as a sealed book, which they are not concerned to look into, and have wholly betaken themselves to those traditionary legends which have been authorized by the NAMES of their wise men, and their prudent men, who have dictated many volumes under the feigned sanction of the ORAL LAW, which have diverted the attention of that people from the truth of God, to take up with the fictions and impostures of crafty or conceited men, misleading them to vain objects and purposes of life.

The delusion is so strong which has arisen from this great mistake of attending to the usurped authority of these wise men, or the prudent men of that nation, who have been distinguished from each other by various denominations or titles of honour given according to the supposed and imaginary excellencies of their doctrines and discourses, that it is needful this offence should be first absolutely taken away, before the Jews can come to have due respect to the word of God, upon which their conversion and salvation do depend. Hence it again recurs to apply the words of our Lord, particularly in this instance, to their present condition, *If they bear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

But so soon as they come to hear the writings of Moses and the prophets, which implies, that they do
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at the same time lay aside the writings of their reputed wise men, who have usurped an authority over the word of God, the delusion which has passed upon that nation will of course have its end; because their attention will be directed to the great purpose of the first Coming of their Messiah, to deliver them from their spiritual enemies; that is, from the power of the evil spirit, the devil, and from sin and death which he introduced: therefore they will acknowledge their Messiah in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath gotten himself the victory, and thereby opened the way for us all, both Jews and Gentiles, to follow him to his heavenly kingdom, and to enjoy everlasting life.

When the Jews and the Gentiles confess the truth, and acknowledge this victory, by complying with the terms of the gospel, which will intitle them to be partakers in it, they will thereby prepare the way for the second Coming of our Lord, exalted in triumph in the fulness and sufficiency of all power, temporal and spiritual, to put down for ever all opposition derived from the evil principle introduced by rebellion against God, that everlasting peace and joy may be established through Jesus Christ our Lord. For which happy time the Psalmist hath long since prepared several hymns fitted for the purpose, particularly the xcviith Psalm, with which I shall conclude.

1. *O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the VICTORY.*

2. *The Lord hath made known his salvation: HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.*

3. *He hath remembered his mercy and his truth towards the HOUSE of ISRAEL: all the earth have seen the salvation of God.*

4. *Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice and give praise.*

5. *Sing unto God with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.*

6. *With*

446 *The Sufferings of the Messiah, &c.*

6. *With trumpets and sound of a cornet : make a joyful noise before the Lord the King.*

7. *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.*

8. *Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together*

9. *Before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity. Amen.*

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